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The Book of the Marvels of India

From the Arabic by

L. MARCEL DEVIC

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PETER QUENNEL

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At a period when Englishmen were still well content to keep their own shores, and the adventurous traditions of a seafaring people had still to be founded, Arabic and Persian sailors, in their frail craft, were venturing down the Persian Gulf, over the Indian Ocean, threading their way through the archipelago of the Indies towards the coasts of China, reaching, it may have been, even Japan.


The Arabs of those days were inveterate travellers and skilled geographers ; they have left us works of travel which, in respect of accuracy and veracity, have little to yield to their European successors in later times. But in this Book of the Marvels of India we have rather a collection of those " Travellers' Tales " with which the returned sailors doubtless regaled those whom the Fates destined to a less adventurous life at home. We find in it an entertaining medley of fables and utterly fantastic stories, parallels to which may sometimes be found in other and better-known relations, but in many of the tales there is an element of truth which renders them not without value to those interested in the maritime exploits of an earlier and simpler age.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The book was written, we are told, fully a thousand years ago by Buzurg ibn Shahriyar of Hurmuz, and the manuscript from which L. Marcel Devic made his French version dates back to the XIIIth century. It is, or was, preserved in the Library of Saint Sophia at Constantinople.

THE BOOK OF THE MARVELS OF INDIA

IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE
MERCIFUL AND COMPASSIONATE
IN WHOM IS MY ONLY REFUGE

LESSED be God, to whom is the kingdom, the power and the glory, liberal and benevolent, who has created divers peoples and nations; who, in his creative might, has allotted them their nature and outward semblance, who, in his power, has ordered their rise and fall, and who, in his wisdom, has shown them the dread works men must accomplish. Cunningly does he build, establish, direct, and restore.

He has said, the most truthful of those who speak: "Read: Thy Lord is the most generous of benefactors, and, by the pen, has shown mankind things it knew not" (*Koran*, ch. xcvi).

His prodigies scattered through the universe, his marvels by land and sea, his excellent work through every part of the world, bear witness that the Creator—Blessed may he be! Exalted

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may he be !—is the One, Eternal, Unmatched, Victorious. Take heed, ye men of clear sight !

He has sent his Prophet, Mohammed, to teach all living creatures where lies the truth and how it may be worshipped. God keep him and his family, as long as ever the lightning shall flash and the sun rises out of the East.

God—Blessed be his name and remembered with praise !—has divided the marvels of his creation in ten parts, nine to the pillar of the rising sun, and but one to the three other pillars, which are those of the quarter of the setting sun, and the North and the South. And, of the nine parts given to the quarter of the rising sun, eight belong to India and China, and a single part to the rest of the East.

I Now, touching India, this is what was told me at Basra by Abou-Mohammed el-Hoseïn, son of Amr, son of Hamouïa, son of Haram, son of Hamouïa.

“In the year 288”, he said, “I was at Mansoura. A respectable person of that town, a man worthy of credence, told me that, in 270, the King of Râ, whose name was Mahrouk, son of Raïq, most powerful of the monarchs of India, possessing a territory which lies betwixt High and Low Cashmere, wrote to the prefect of Mansoura, Abdallah, son of Omar, son of

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Abd-el-Aziz, to ask for an Indian translation of the laws of Islam.

Abdallah communicated this request to a man, who at that time happened to be staying in Mansoura, a native of Iraq, a being of superior wit and fine intelligence, a poet too, and one who had been brought up in India and understood its various tongues. This man put into verse all that is necessary for the understanding of our faith, and his work was sent to the King, with whom it found such favour, that he begged Abdallah to send the author to him. So the poet was sent, and stayed there three years. Afterwards he returned to Mansoura. The prefect questioned him about the sovereign-prince of Râ. 'When I left him', he said, 'the King was already a Musulman, both in heart and lips. But, fearing he might be dispossessed of his power, he would not profess Islam openly. He bade me translate the *Koran* into Indian for him, which I did. And when I had come to the verse, called Ya-Sin, and I was translating to him the word of God : 'Who is it gives life to rotten bones ? Reply : He who first fashioned them, whose wisdom comprehends the whole of creation', sitting upon a golden throne, inlaid with precious stones and with pearls of incomparable value, 'Repeat that', he said, and I repeated it, and straightway down from his throne he got and, pacing to and fro over the earth which had been watered and was still damp, presently he laid

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his cheek against the ground and wept, so that his face was smirched with mud. 'Yes', he said to me, 'it is him we ought to adore, the Master, who was in the beginning, the ancient of days, he who has no peer' ! The King had built him a closet, where he used to retire, pretending weighty business, but, in reality, to offer secret prayers, unknown to any. Thrice he favoured me with presents, which amounted to six hundred pounds of gold".

II The same informant told me that the inhabitants of High Cashmere hold a festival-day each year, when they meet together ; and their minister, holding in his hand a vessel of unbaked clay, ascends the pulpit, performs his office and says : " See this brittle vessel of clay. It is cared for, and so intact. Do you also watch over your souls and your worldly goods, and keep them intact ". Tradition has it, that this vessel is four thousand years old.

III I have it from Abou-Abdallah Mohammed, son of Bâlishâd, son of Haram,

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son of Hamouïa, citizen of Siraf, who, in his time, was famous among the ship-captains who go to the gold-bearing countries, most knowledgeable of God's creatures, where things of the sea are concerned, a distinguished sailor and an honest man, I have it from him, I say, that there is in the valley of Serendib, in a country named Abrir, a great city, which numbers some thirty markets or more, some of them at least half a mile long. Here are *gobbiya* fabrics, beautiful and of great price. The town is built on the banks of a large river which flows into the sea of *gobbs*. The inhabitants have about six hundred principal pagodas, without counting the little. The extent of the city is nearly four hundred *berids*.

Beyond the town is a mountain, at the base of which is a spring, and, on the mountain-side, is an enormous tree, all of brass and bronze, bristling with thorns, like huge needles or like skewers. Fronting the tree stands a big idol, represented as a Blackamoor, with topaz eyes. Every year, the inhabitants hold a solemn festival round this image. Thither they go, climb the mountain, and whosoever wishes to find favour with his Lord, drinks, sings, makes frequent prostrations before the idol, then, down from the mountain-peak hurls himself upon the brazen tree, and is torn to shreds by its thorns. And others there are, who dash themselves head first against the rock, over which flows the spring, below the black idol.

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The poor wretch is crushed against the stone, and from the water passes into hell-fire.

IV The same narrator has assured me, that in India, at Fctouh, there are women who take an areca nut in a certain place between their lips, and crack it by squeezing them together.

V He also told me that Mardouïa, son of Zerâikht, one of the sailors who go to China and the gold-bearing countries, used to relate how, voyaging one day within the confines of the Isle of Rih, he sailed between two eminences, jutting out of the sea, which he took for the peaks of two submarine mountains, but that, when he had passed, they sank back again into the water ; and Mardouïa realised that they were the two pincers of a crab.

Whereupon, I said to Abou-Mohammed : “ Who told you that story ? ” “ With my own ears I heard it,” he replied. “ It was an extraordinary thing to happen, of course ; and what comment to make, I don’t know, unless I add that, in the sea, crabs do often attain to a prodigious dimension ”.

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VI Another sailor to the gold-bearing countries, Ismaïl, son of Ibrahim, son of Mardâs, who generally went by the name of Ismaïlouïa, son-in-law of Ashkatîn, told me that during one of his voyages to the gold-countries, some mishap which befel the ship obliged him to put in near Lâmeri. Wishing to moor the ship, he bade drop the great anchor ; but the ship, they knew not why, continued its course. Then the captain said to the diver : “ Go down the anchor-cable and see what is the matter ”. And the diver, making ready to go down, looked under water ; and there was the anchor, between a crab’s claws, the crab playing with it and dragging the ship along. The sailors shouted and flung stones into the water. They hauled the anchor up, that they might drop it elsewhere. Now the anchor weighed six hundred pounds and more.

VII According to the story communicated to me by Âbou-Mohammed el-Hassan, son of Amr, a ship’s-captain told him, that, being set out for Zâbedj on a ship which belonged to him, the wind drove them towards the isles of Wâqwâq, where they were obliged to put in not far from a village. Seeing them, the inhabitants fled into the country, carrying

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off such of their property as they were able. Those on ship-board, ignorant of the country and not knowing to what cause they ought to attribute the inhabitants' flight, dared not go ashore. So there the ship stayed two days, and still no one approached the ship or made any parley. At last, a sailor, who understood the Wâqwâqian language, was put over the side, and ventured through the town, on his way towards the open country. Lighting on a man, hidden beneath a tree, he addressed him, offering him some dates which he carried. Why had the natives all taken to their heels, he asked, promising that no harm should come to him, and that it should be worth his while if he told the truth.

The fellow replied that, seeing the ship, the inhabitants thought they were going to be attacked and, with their king, had run off into the open country and the forest. He agreed to follow the sailor to the ship. Three companions were allotted him, charged with a fair message to the king, and also bearing a present, of two pieces of stuff, some dates, and various trifles.

Reassured, the king came back with all his people. The sailors took up their lodging amongst them, and began bartering with the cargo of the ship.

But the twentieth day had not yet gone by, when up came another tribe to attack the first. "They are coming, you see", explained the

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townspeople's king, "to harry me and pillage my goods, because they imagine I have laid my fingers on the ship's cargo. So do you help me against them; help me by helping yourselves".

At dawn, continued my narrator, the enemy was at the town gate, ready for battle. And the king and his men issued to meet them, supported by as many able-bodied men as the ship's company could muster and such of the merchants as were inclined for a fight. Battle was joined, but, in the press, a sailor, a native of Iraq, drew from his girdle a sheet of paper, on which was written a bill owing to him, and, unfolding it, held it up towards the sky, declaiming certain words at the top of his voice.

The attackers saw it, and straightway paused. Some ran up to him, crying: "No more of that, for God's sake! We'll go quietly! We won't touch anything!" And one to another they exclaimed: "Give over, give over fighting! Our enemies have put their quarrel in God's hands. We shall be beaten and cut to pieces". And they bowed down before the sailor, till he had tucked the paper away again, and presently withdrew, using the most humble language.

Thus rid of them, my informant went on, we returned to our usual business of buying and selling. The king was all ours. We never stopped swindling the natives, stole their children, bought them from their fellows, with loin-cloths, trinkets, and dates, and so

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prospered that we had finally stocked our ship with an hundred head of slaves, big and little.

Four months passed, and now the time of departure drew in. The slaves we had bought or stolen said to us : " Don't take us away ! Leave us here ! It is not right to carry us off into slavery, and separate us from our families ". But much we cared ! On board, they were chained up, some manacled by the feet and others bound with cords. Five men of the crew stayed on board, to guard them and tend the ship. One night, the prisoners hurled themselves on the guard, bound them, hauled up the anchor and set sail, stealing our ship under cover of darkness. Morning came, and it had gone. There we were stranded, reduced for sole property and provision to what poor odds and ends we had left in the town. Nothing could be heard of the ship. Many months we had to stay there, till we had built a light skiff which would bear us, and then embarked, in the utmost destitution.

VIII Ahmed, son of Ali, son of Mounîr, the ship's captain, a native of Siraf, another of those far-famed sailors who scour the seas and bring home glory and renown, has informed me that a respectable person of India once told him the following story. A ship

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was wrecked in the neighbourhood of Serendib, and certain of the company, escaping in the longboat, landed upon an island off the coast of India. There they stayed some time and, many of them dying, their number was at length reduced to seven. But, in the meantime, they had noticed a gigantic bird settle on the island, pick up its food and fly away again towards the evening, though whither it flew they could not discover. This observation led them to consider a plan ; and their plan was, that, in turn, they should each of them tie themselves to the bird's shank and let themselves be carried off, so tedious was their exile and so powerless they seemed to avoid death. Only the bird could rescue them. Supposing it should drop them near an inhabited district—that was their hearts' desire ; supposing it killed them, that would hardly be a change for the worse.

So, one of the castaways hid himself among the trees and, when as usual the bird lighted to feed, and a moment before it took flight, he slid quietly towards it and was handy enough to catch hold of its shank and lash himself in place with strands of fibrous bark. Away flew the bird, lifting him high into the air, and, with the man clinging there, his legs crooked round the creature's shank, crossed an arm of the sea and, presently, at sunset, settled upon a mountain. The man loosed himself and tumbled to the ground, half-dead with fatigue, utter exhaustion, and terror, and lay motion-

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less till the next day dawned. Then he rose, looked about him and caught sight of a shepherd, whom he addressed in the Indian tongue and asked the name of his whereabouts. The shepherd named a city of India, and gave him a drink of milk. Eventually he gained the city.

As for the other six castaways, one after another they were taken off by the same means and, at last, all of them foregathered in that same city. Thence they gained a seaport, took ship and, returning home, told the strange story of their shipwreck and of the bird. As for the distance, which the bird covered, betwixt the island and the mountain where it dropped them, it was estimated at more than two hundred *parasangs*.

IX Touching this matter of monstrous animals, Aboul'-Hassan Mohammed, son of Ahmed, son of Amr, of Siraf, tells me that, in the year 300, he saw at Oman, a fish, which the sea had washed up and left on the beach. It had been taken and hauled along some distance. The Emir Ahmed, son of Helal, visited it on horseback with his troops, among a great concourse of people who had collected to view the monster. So huge was it, that a horseman rode into one side of its jaws and out

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at the other. It was measured and its length found to be more than two hundred ells and its thickness, from top to bottom, fifty. Oil was drawn from it and sold, as the report goes, for a sum, amounting to ten or twenty thousand *dirhems*.

The ship's captain, Ismailouïa, has informed me that this fish abounds in the sea of Zindj and in the Ocean of Herkend. It is called *Wak*, and amuses itself by ramming ships. When sailors encounter it, they do their best to frighten it away by shouts, by beating drums and thumping together two pieces of wood. Each time it blows water, you see a spout rise tall as a lighthouse, and from the distance, you would swear it was the sail of a ship. Also, when it frolics with its tail and flukes, you might take it for some great ship under sail.

X I have heard tell by a man of Iraq that he had seen in Yemen, at the house of one of his friends, a fish's head, whence the flesh had perished, leaving the skull intact. He was able to walk in at this eye-socket and walk out at that, without bending his head. In the year 310, the jawbone of one of these fishes was brought from Omam to the Caliph Moqtadir. It had afforded more than five hundred casks of oil.

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XI According to a story told me by Abou-Mohammed el-Hassan, son of Amr, a sailor related in his hearing, that, while he was on a ship, going from Aden to Jeddah, a fish ran so violently against the hull of the vessel, that they were all persuaded it must have made a hole. However, the sailors, who went down into the hold, reported no more water there than usual, and they were extremely surprised that such a terrific blow should have left no trace. But, when they had arrived at Jeddah and the cargo had been discharged, the ship was beached and there, stuck in the ship's side, they discovered the fish's head, neatly bunging the aperture it had made. After the collision, the creature had found itself unable to withdraw its head; and its head had been severed from its body, and remained fixed in place.

XII The same informant tells me that he has often seen a fish caught and opened, and smaller fishes found in its belly, and in their bellies still others. This comes of fishes swallowing littler fishes, who have themselves been swallowing their kind.

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XIII Among other curious pieces of information, Mohammed, son of Bâlishâd, son of Haram, tells me that he happened to be in Siraf, at a time when there was general anxiety, regarding the fate of a ship, which some time since had set out for Basra and of which there was no news. Recently many shipwrecks had occurred, and everyone took an interest in any news from sea. This ship was carrying a numerous company, sailors and others as well, besides a rich cargo. Now a woman had been out buying fish, and, cleaning one of them, found in its belly, a signet-ring. On examination, she recognised it as belonging to her brother, who had also embarked upon the said ship. She gave a scream of despair. The news spread, and presently every house, whose inmate, friend, kith or kin was on board the ship, became a scene of mourning. And it was not till several days later that they heard that the vessel had indeed been shipwrecked and not a soul escaped.

XIV A pilot informs me that, in the neighbourhood of Yemen, his ship was followed for a day and two nights by a fish which accompanied them without ever outstripping the vessel or dropping behind. The

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course they ran together was estimated at more than seventy *parasangs*. This fish was as long as the ship, which measured fifty ells, as the ell is usually estimated, that is to say from the arm-pit to the end of the middle finger.

I asked him what was it made these creatures follow and run races with ships. "They have different reasons", said the pilot. "Some there are who follow a ship, because they hope to profit by this or that falling out. Previously they have happened upon a shipwrecked vessel and been able to regale themselves; so every vessel they see inspires in them the expectation of a like feast. The pursuit of ships becomes a habit. Again, there are others, astounded by the sight of a ship, which they imagine to be an animal, swimming half in and half out of the water, who try to race it, from sheer good-humour and a spirit of friendly rivalry, till they give up, exhausted; for all animals have not the patience of the ass. Yet others persist doggedly in their race with the ship, and when they find themselves exhausted, beaten, outraced by this mysterious creature, they make a last furious effort and hurl themselves straight against it. Our vessel may withstand the collision . . . and if not, God help us! And sometimes the angry fish is merciless in its attack, and strikes time after time till it has capsized the ship. Other fishes, again, take fright and flee at the appearance of a ship. In fact, their behaviour varies with the region of

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the sea in which they dwell, whether it is near a populated coast and on routes frequented by travellers and fishermen, or whether it is in distant, unexplored seas, in the profundity of ocean, far from islands or mainland. The world of the ocean depths is, indeed, another world". Blessed be God, the excellent Creator! . . .

XV Here is the story, told me about the island of women by the *nakhoda*, Abou'z-Zahr el-Barkhati, an important personage of Siraf, who had it from one of the women inhabiting these islands. Previously he had been a fire-worshipper, following the practice of the Indians. His word was generally respected and every man was ready to entrust him with his property and the lives of his children. At last he embraced the religion of Islam, made an excellent Musulman and accomplished his pilgrimage. A man, so he told me, set out in a large ship that belonged to him, carrying a company of merchants of many different nations. Arrived at the sea of Malayou, they drew near the confines of China and had already caught sight of some mountainous eminence of the land, when a sudden and frightful wind sprang up, blowing against the vessel's course, so violent that there was no

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withstanding it, while the fury of the waves put steering quite out of the question. The wind drove them towards Canopus. Now whoever, in those seas, is blown so far that Canopus stands right overhead, let that man abandon all hope of return. He is hurried along upon a mass of water, rushing towards the South ; and, as the ship proceeds, the waves are heaped up behind him,—on our side, that is to say,—and, on the other side, the flood declines before him. Thus, whatever may be the wind, whether it be fair or foul, all way of escape is shut, and the current draws him down across the immensity of the ocean.

When the ship's company saw that they were rushing towards Canopus, and night had come on, and they beheld thick darkness all around, powerless to steer a course, they despaired of their lives. Now the might of the waves would swing them almost to the clouds and now it plunged them in the abyss. All night they suffered dense fog, on a pitch-black sea, and when dawn came, they saw it not, for the darkness encompassing them and the fog which clung to the inky surface of the water, the ragings of the wind and the trouble and confusion of the sky. And through this long night, hopeless of their safety, given over to the fury of the tempest, upon a boiling sea, buffeted by fearful waves, their vessel bounding, plunging, quivering, creaking, the passengers bade one another good-bye and severally each man

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invoked the power of the deity he served ; for there were among them men of China, India, Persia, and from the Isles. That done, they made up their minds to die.

Thus passed two days and two nights, though night from day they could not tell. And about the middle of the third night, they saw the horizon fronting them glow as with some stupendous fire. Terror seized on them ; and, addressing themselves to the captain,—“ Can you not see,” they exclaimed, “ this fearful glow that fills the horizon, towards which we are being driven ? See how it encircles us, and we had rather be drowned than burned. In the name of your god, make the ship founder and us with it in the depths of this gulf, amid this darkness, where, at least, each of us will finish beyond sight of his companions’ agony. Do as we ask and you are quit of what befalls us. These last nights and days, have we not died a thousand-thousand deaths ? Is it not better to die once for all ? ”

But the captain answered, “ You must realise that travellers and merchants run frightful dangers, dangers far worse than those that daunt you now. Besides, we pilots of the guild have to do our duty, and we swear to let no ship perish till its hour is struck. We pilots, when we go aboard a ship, there our life is and there our destiny : swim and we swim : sink and we sink with it. Have patience, trust yourselves to the good pleasure of the ruler

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of wind and wave, who bridles the storm as he pleases ”.

Hearing the captain refuse their plea, the passengers wept, groaned, and bewailed their lot. In vain, might the captain bid the boat-swain give the crew such and such orders as the situation of the ship rendered expedient ; the roar of the sea, hubbub of the clashing waves, bellowing of the wind among the sails and cordage, and the lamentation of the passengers deafened their ears. And the vessel must have gone to the bottom, less by reason of the wind and sea, than by human fecklessness and the confusion which resulted.

There happened to be in the ship a Musulman, native of Cadiz in Spain, who, in the press of embarkation, had escaped the captain's notice and slipped on board the night they set sail. Whereupon he had stowed himself away in a retired corner of the ship, fearing the opprobrium and ill-treatment he might receive did he show his face. But, when he saw how things stood with the ship, the dangers they were all running, and how the folly of man conspired with the fury of the waves against their common safety, he incontinently left his hiding-place, come what might of it, and, going up to his shipmates, “What is it ?” he demanded. “Has the ship sprung a leak ?” They answered him, “No ”.—“Is the rudder broken ?”—“No ”. “Are you being swamped ?”—“No ”. “What is the matter,

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then?"—"Good Lord," they replied, "you talk just as if you weren't here with us, on this ship! Can't you see the fearful storm, the waves, the darkness which hems us in, hiding sun and moon, so that we cannot steer a course? And look, Canopus stands overhead, and we are the sport of winds and waves. But worse still is that fire towards which we are hurried along, which already fills the whole horizon. We had rather be drowned than burned, and we have begged the captain to let his ship founder, amid this darkness, which would hide us one from another, that we may die by water, and not by fire, with the added pain of watching our companions burn with us".

Said the stowaway, "Take me to the captain". Brought before him, he saluted him in the Indian tongue. The captain, surprised to see an unknown man, returned his salutation and asked him, "Who are you, a merchant or one of their train? We don't remember you as one of the company who set sail with us". "I am neither a merchant", the man replied, "nor do I belong to their train".—"Why did you come on board, then, and what is it you sell?" the captain answered. "Why", said he, "I slipped in among the crowd, just as you were setting sail, and hid myself in a corner of the ship".—"But how did you live?"—"On a plate of rice, with butter in it, that one of your sailors set down

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near my hiding-place every day, and a saucer of water too for the guardian angels of the ship. That was how I lived. As to what I have brought to sell, it is a skin of crushed dates ”.

All this mightily surprised the captain, while the passengers, diverted by the adventure, made an end of their distracted cries ; the crew went about its business ; at the voice of the boatswain, sails and rigging were put to rights, and the ship was once more got under control. “ Tell me, Captain ”, said the man from Cadiz, “ why were all these people crying and lamenting ? ”—“ Eh ! ” he replied, “ Can’t you understand these waves and winds and this darkness putting them to fright, and, worse still, the glow that fills the horizon, whither the storm is driving us ? Now I have scoured these seas ever since I was a child, when I followed my father who had sailed them all his life. I am already past my eightieth year, and I never yet heard tell of anyone who had seen the like of what we see now or had told of any such thing ”.—“ Be calm ”, said the stranger. “ By God’s grace, you shall all be saved. What you see is an island, closed in by a rim of mountains, the sea waves breaking against them. At night, it has the look of some tremendous fire and frightens the witless. But, as soon as the sun has risen, the apparition is no more and turns to water. This fire may be seen from Spain ; I

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have seen it there once, and now a second time ”.

At the stranger's words, there was great joy through the whole ship, fears abated and panic was stilled ; they ate and drank. And now the wind slackened and the sea grew smooth, and, with the rising sun, they drew near the island. The sky had cleared, and they reviewed the land and chose a good anchorage. The ship drew in, and all would get ashore. Down on the sand they flung themselves, and rolled upon the blessed earth, and not one soul was left aboard ship.

But, in the midst of their joy, suddenly from the interior of the island there issued a horde of women, God knows how many, and fell on the men, a thousand women or more to every one man, and carried them away towards the mountains and forced them to become the instruments of their pleasure. They fought among themselves without ceasing, and the sturdiest took her man. One after another, the men dropped off and died of sheer exhaustion ; and whenever a man died, they hurled themselves upon him, none the less, caring nothing for the pestilential odour of his corpse. Only one man survived, and he was the Spaniard, of whom a single woman had taken possession. She visited him at night, and at dawn hid him away near the sea, bringing him food. Presently the wind changed and began to blow in the direction of India, whence the vessel had

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come. The man lay hands on a little boat, called a *felou*, and, by night, stocked it with water and victuals. The woman, seeing his purpose, led him to a place where she turned back the earth and showed him a mine of gold dust. Together they loaded the boat with it, as full as it would hold. Then together they got on board, and, after ten days' journey, reached that port from which the vessel had originally set out. There the man told his tale.

The woman stayed with the Spaniard, learned his tongue, took the Musulman faith, and bore him several children. Questioned concerning the island and the women who dwell there, without the society of man, this was what she said :

"We come from a land, where are many great cities, encircling the island, the nearest being some three days' and three nights' sail distant. The inhabitants, royal as well as simple, worship the nightly fire which shines round the island. They call the island the House of the Sun, because the sun rises at its easterly tip and sinks behind the western shore ; and, as they believe, the sun spends the night in the island. In the morning, at dawn, the night-fire pales and dies out, and, straightway, the sun rises : ' Behold him, behold him ', they cry, and they adore him, prostrating themselves on the ground everyone and uttering up prayers. And thus it is when the sun goes down and the fire rises again.

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You must know that it is God's will, that the women of that land should be brought to bed, first of a boy, then of twin girls, and so on for the rest of their lives. So it happened in our country, that there were few men and a superfluity of women, and the women were desirous of ruling them. Then the men fitted out ships, thrust on board some thousands of women, and came to discharge them on this island, saying to their god, the Sun, 'What thou hast created is thine to dispose of; for us, we have no more hand over them'.

So the women were left in the island, where, one after another, they died. Since we came there, we never set eyes on man. Not once has a man landed there. For our island is situated in the vastness of the sea, beneath Canopus. No traveller can land there and venture forth again; none dares leave the shore and the security of dry land, fearing lest he be swallowed up in the sea. Thus has the All-Powerful willed it. Blessed be God, the most benign of Creators".

XVI Captain Abou'z-zahrâ el-Bark-hati tells me the following story, which he had from his maternal uncle whose name was Ibn-Enshartou. "I set out in a great ship which belonged to me", this uncle's father used to

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relate, "and we directed our course towards the Isle of Qaisour. The wind drove us into a bay, where we stayed thirty-three days in a dead calm, without a breath of wind, on an unrippled sea. We sounded, and found no bottom at a thousand fathoms' depth. But, unsuspecting, we drifted with a current, till it had carried us among the islands. Towards one of these islands we steered, and there all along the beach were women, who swam and plunged and played. Making friendly gestures, we approached them, but they fled into the island before our advance. Soon the natives accosted us, both men and women, who seemed extremely intelligent, but spoke an unknown tongue. We expressed ourselves with signs, and they did the like. We understood them and they understood us. 'Can you sell us food?' 'Yes'. And they brought us an abundance of rice, chickens, ewes, honey, butter, fruit, and other provisions. We paid them in iron, copper-ware, kohl, glass beads, and clothing. 'Have you any other wares?' we signed to them again. 'Only slaves'. 'Very well. Bring them here'. And they confronted us with the most beautiful slaves we had ever seen, and the merriest, dancing, playing, frolicking, and fooling between themselves. Their bodies were plump and soft to touch as cream. So light they were and so lively that every moment, you thought, they were ready to take wing. Only their heads were tiny and, below their flanks,

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they had a kind of wing or fluke, like turtles. 'What's that?' we asked the islanders. 'Don't trouble yourselves', they answered, laughing. 'All the islanders are made like that', pointing to the sky, as who should say: 'God created us thus'. Without giving the matter any further consideration, 'Done!' we cried, and, judging these slaves to be a good bargain, we bought of them, each according to his substance. We emptied the ship of merchandise, and stocked it with slaves and victuals. We had hardly purchased some, when they brought us others still fairer, and to such purpose that the vessel was populated with creatures, than whom the eyes had never seen lovelier or more graceful. And, if the bargain had turned out well, here was the wherewithal to enrich ourselves and our children's children after us.

But the hour of parting came, and the wind blew towards our native country. The islanders sped us on our way, remarking: 'Please God, you will come back another time!' And so we could have wished. The captain, also, wished he might return, but with an empty ship and unencumbered by merchants. And he passed the night, with his men, watching the stars, noticing how stood the constellations, and so took his bearings and fixed in his mind the course to steer there and back.

We were delighted, all of us, full of the liveliest pleasure. At daybreak, we sailed and

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left the island with a favouring breeze. The island vanished from our eyes, and then what should some of our slaves do, but set about boo-hooing. That annoyed us. But up came other slaves, and 'Why make a to-do?' they said. 'Come! Let us amuse ourselves; let us dance and sing!' And the whole company of them fell to dancing and singing, interrupted by laughter. So without giving them a second thought, we severally busied ourselves at our own affairs, and the slaves took advantage of our slackness and, choosing the propitious moment, away they sprang and cleared the deck like a flight of locusts. Fast as a lightning flash was our vessel running, in front of a stiff gale, and the waves were mountain high. The fugitives were in the sea, and a *parasang* behind, before ever we knew the trick they had played us. We could hear them laughing, singing, and clapping their hands. Amid the violence of a stormy sea, they, at least, we understood, felt themselves perfectly at home, and, since we could by no means turn about, we gave up any hope of recapturing them.

Thus of the entire cargo remained only one young she-slave who belonged to my father and whom he had shut up in a roomy cabin. My father ran down to the cabin and found the girl trying to tear her way out, that she also might fling herself into the sea. He seized and bound her.

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When our voyage was done, and we were once more in India, we sold such provisions as we still carried ; and, after we had gone shares, each man found his capital diminished to a tenth. The report of our adventure brought an old man to see us, who had been born in these islands, had been taken very young, and had subsequently remained in India. ‘The islands where chance led you’, the old man told us, ‘are called the Islands of the Fish. That is my native land. There men formerly coupled with the female of sea-creatures, and women gave themselves to the males of the same kind. From these unions were born a race of beings who shared the nature of both mother and father, and presently bred among themselves. Long has it been so. And we are equally the natives of sea and land, dividing our ancestry between men and fish.’

But to go back to my father’s slave,—she bore him six children, of whom I was the sixth. He kept her eighteen years, but always tied up ; for the old man, who had revealed their mysteries, said : ‘Let her loose, and she will fling herself into the sea and so good-bye.’ Water attracts us fatally. My father, then, took the old man’s advice. We grew up and our father died ; and, as we, without considering the matter, had always blamed him for keeping our mother tied up, the first thing we did was to unbind her, from pity, respect, and

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filial piety. Out of the house she flew, like some mare leading in a race, and we on her heels, but could not catch her. 'Where are you off to',—somebody cried, as she crossed them in her flight,—'leaving your sons and daughters behind?' '*Enshartou*', she replied, which is interpreted: 'What have I to do with them?' And, like the strongest of fishes, she flung herself into the sea. 'Glory be to the Creator, who brings forth and who ordains! Glory be to God, the best of Creators!'"

XVII Touching this matter of fish, Abou'l-Hassan, son of Amr, tells me: "I have seen a fish's rib, brought by some ship-master. Five ells length of it had been cut off and thrown over a stream, by way of bridge, at the gate of a garden which belonged to me in Djezira. The rest was twenty ells long".

There is a kind of fish in the sea, against which no other fish can stand. It has a beak, resembling a saw, jagged on both sides. Should it strike a fish, it cuts its opponent clean in half. The natives of those coasts which it frequents, arm themselves with the beaks of such sword-fish as they take or find dead, and thus for their battles make weapons far deadlier than any sabre.

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XVIII A sailor, native of the seaports of Iraq, tells me the following story, which he had from an old ship's-captain. His ship left Siraf, and he had a man on board who, during the voyage, fell out with one of the passengers, swore at him, and transgressed all the limits of decency. The passenger made no reply; he was a foreigner; there was no one to take his side, and, besides, the aggressor had been allowed on board as a favour, and at his own special request. The quarrelsome fellow was standing on the deck. Well, hardly three minutes after the altercation, a *kaba'da* jumped out of the sea, struck the fellow with its head, and jumped back again on the other side. The man was picked up dead, and his corpse thrown into the sea.

XIX Many are the curious stories I have heard tell about tortoises, and such as the mind can scarce credit. I have it from Abou-Mohammed el-Hassan, son of Amr, that he heard an old sailor relate, how a ship, setting out from India, happened on some mischance and put into a little island, which was entirely bare of wood or water, but where their situation obliged them to anchor and disembark their cargo, while they set the vessel to rights. That done, the bales were re-embarked, and

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they made ready for departure. But, in the midst of all this, there fell the Feast of the New Year, and the ship's company celebrated it by carrying ashore what they could scrape together of small pieces of wood, palm leaves, and rags, and making a bonfire. Suddenly the whole island shook, quivered under their feet, and, since they stood not far from the water, in they cast themselves and clung onto the sides of the ship. At that very moment, the island dived down into the waves, with such a swirl that it was a wonder they were not everyone drowned. They barely escaped with their lives, a prey to the keenest terror.

Now, the little island was no more nor less than a tortoise, lying asleep on the surface of the water; woken by the singeing of their bonfire, it had taken to flight.

How had that come to pass? I asked my narrator. "Each year", he told me, "the tortoise rises to the surface of the water for a certain sum of days, to rest itself after its long sojourn in the caverns of the sea, among the clefts and crannies of the ocean bottom, where flourish monstrous trees and fearful herbage, far, far stranger than any plant or tree our earth can show. It rises to the surface and lies wallowing there days together, quite stupid, like a man in drink. But, as soon as it comes to itself, back it plunges. And when the male couples with the female, their nuptials always take place on the surface of the ocean".

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XX An old sailor told Abou'l-Hassan, son of Amr, who, in his turn, told me the story, that sailing in the *gobbs* (of Serendib) he had been the guest of a monarch of those regions. "They put food before us", he said, "and we ate. Now among this repast, there happened to be a sauce, in which floated bits of cooked meat, heads, hands, and feet, just as it might have been the heads, feet, and hands of young boys. That turned my gorge and I ate no more, though, till that moment, my appetite was keen. The king took notice of it, but said nothing. Next day, when I went to pay him my respects, he gave the order to his people to bring in a fish; and, but for its scales and the fish-like squirmings it made, I had thought it a son of Adam. 'There!' said the king, 'this is what your stomach turned against, the best of our fish, the best flavoured, the easiest to digest, and the least noxious'. And thenceforth I found no difficulty in eating it".

XXI Someone, who had travelled in Zeïla and the land of the Abyssinians, told me that in the Sea of Habash there lives a fish which in every way resembles a son of Adam, his body, feet, and hands. The fishermen who

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go far afield, poor wretches whose lot it is to get their living in unexplored regions, on the wild seashores, amidst the islands and the mountains, where never human soul comes their way, sometimes light upon this human-visaged fish, and couple with the females. Thence are born creatures, like unto men but amphibious. Perhaps these human-looking fishes were originally derived from the union of man and some kind of fish, a union which would have produced these creatures resembling men, and thereafter such couplings have been repeated during the course of the centuries. Thus it is that man, allying himself with the panther, the hyena, and other beasts of the earth, has begotten the monkey, the *nesna*, and other creatures which resemble him. And thus it is that the mingling of pigs and buffaloes has produced the elephant, of dogs and goats the wild boar, of the ass and the mare the mule. If it were our purpose to enumerate all the different products of this sort of cross-breeding, our material might well prove startling but would lead us away from our proper subject, which is the Marvels of India.

The fish, called *zhaloum*, has, so they say, a human face and sexual organs which are like ours, both the male and the female. It is caught, and its hide, thicker than the hide of the elephant, is tanned and used for shoe-leather.

It is affirmed that every bird which flies in the

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air, over the face of the ground, has its equivalent among the fishes. I, for my part, have seen in the Gulf of Ayla, in Syria, a little fish, coloured like a green woodpecker, which keeps flitting all the time in and out of the water.

XXII Among other curiosities of the Sea of Fars, sometimes at night, when the waves are running high and dashing together, the water is seen to sparkle, and the sailor would swear that he was voyaging over a sea of fire.

XXIII There are also in the ocean, so they say, monstrous snakes, terrible creatures called *tannin*. In mid-winter, when the clouds hang low on the surface of the water, this *tannin* leaves the sea and enters into a cloud, still warm from the warmth of the element it has deserted ; for the sea-water is warm at that season of the year. The chill grips it, and there it stays in the cloud, imprisoned. And, the winds blowing over the surface of the water, the cloud rises and carries off the *tannin* with it ; and so it voyages from one point of the horizon

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to another. And when the vapour of the cloud is dissipated and flies away in rags, scattered by the wind, no longer supported, down falls the *tannin* again, sometimes on land, sometimes in the sea. As often as God wishes to plague a nation, he lets fall a *tannin* in their territory, and the monster eats up their camels, their horses, their kine, their sheep, till it can find no more to devour and so dies ; or till God rids them of it.

Sailors, travellers, merchants, and ships'-captains have told me how, more than once, they have watched it sweep overhead, all black, trailing its length in the clouds. Now and again, its tail was dangling in the air ; but if it felt the cold, it disappeared, coiling itself away in the cloud. Blessed be God, the best of Creators !

XXIV Abou'zahrâ el-Barkhati has furnished me with certain particulars, concerning the serpents of India. An Indian physician, who dwelt in Serendib, told him that there are in India some three thousand one hundred and twenty kinds of snakes, and that the worst kind are in the land of Taka. When the wind blows from this quarter, it kills everything it touches, birds, quadrupeds, reptiles, for a distance of three *parasangs* on every side.

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And this district is only inhabited a part of the year. People live here, that is to say, while the wind blows from the sea. But, as soon as ever the wind begins to blow from the land, from the province of the serpents, the inhabitants rouse one another and, fleeing away to their ships, take refuge among the islands of the sea. When the wind has dropped, back they come all together, and, disembarking, till the soil and sow their harvest ; or else they work the mines, for the land of Taka is rich in mines of gold and silver. . . .

XXV A ship's-captain relates how, driven into a bay by adverse winds, he and his men went ashore and walked into a marshy thicket, where lay the tumbled trunks of ancient trees, heaped one upon another. He wandered about, this way and that, looking for the timber to make his ship a mast. Finally he chose a splendid trunk, perfectly smooth and straight, and of noble girth besides. Other trees were thrown across it, in the utmost confusion, just as if its fall dated from many years back. They measured it, and found it longer than they needed. Thereupon they took a saw, and prepared to cut it down to the length their business then demanded, a matter of fifty cubits. But, hardly had the saw begun its work

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and was cutting into the trunk, when the trunk stirred and made as if to crawl away. It was a serpent. The sailors, for their part, were not slow in regaining the beach, flinging themselves into the water, and climbing on board ship. And this they did without further accident.

XXVI Mohammed, son of Bâlishâd, tells me that once, while he made the crossing from India to China and was travelling on one of the neighbouring seas, the hour of the first prayer being come, he went down into the closet to perform his ablutions, and, happening to cast his eyes upon the sea, up he got again in a panic and ran on deck, without any further thought for what he had come to do. "Down with the sails, men!" he commanded. And they did as he bade them. "Throw the cargo into the sea", was his next command. He went down close to the water's surface, and, in the voice of a man struck by terror, "You merchants", he asked, "which do you love best, the goods you have a thousand ways of replacing, or your lives, which, once gone, you never can restore?" "Good Lord", exclaimed the merchants, "what's the matter that you should harangue us thus? The wind is soft; the sea is smooth; and here we are,

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sailing along peacefully, under the protection of the Lord of the Worlds." "Merchants", he answered them, "be you my witnesses one against another, and may the crew witness for me against you all: I have counselled you before the hour of doom, and you have rejected my counsel. Now, for my part, I leave you to the mercy of God".

At the same time, he ordered the coxswain of the long-boat to bring it round. And, climbing down, he had a store of water and food carried down with him, and put off. The merchants, seeing him go, shouted to him: "Come back, and we will do your bidding". "I swear by God", he replied "that I will do no such thing till, with your own hands and of your own free will, you have thrown overboard all that you possess".

The merchants made no further ado; everything was thrown into the sea, whether it was worthless or of great price. And presently there was nothing left on board, but men, water, and victuals. The captain returned, climbed on board again, and "Ah! If only you knew what is waiting for us to-night", he said. "Believe me; purify your souls and pray; repent of your past sins and implore the forgiveness of God". Each did as he bade them. And, when night had come, sure enough, God opened the gates of the sky and loosed a wind, which filled the space between heaven and earth and dashed the waves against

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the clouds and let them tumble back against the shore. Many were the ships which the storm carried off, both upon the high seas and along the sea-coast ; few were the mariners who escaped.

But, as for this ship which, by a God-sent inspiration, had been lightened, with the sacrifice of its whole cargo, tossed on a boiling sea, it rode the waves and remained seaworthy. The passengers recited verses of the *Koran*, prayed and called on God. Three days and three nights, they could neither eat nor drink.

On the fourth day, God gave a sign to winds and waves ; the wind dropped and the sea grew calm. He quieted the storm, as, we know, His is the power. And the sailors launched the long-boat and rowed it to the front, towing the ship a day and a night. Thus they reached an island, where the sea had gathered together the wreckage of ships, rigging, and bales which the storm had swept up from many different countries. Here they anchored, and even found again what they had themselves lost. This they recovered and stowed away. They also chose and possessed themselves of everything they liked, among such merchandise as was still unspoiled by the water. They buried the corpses of the drowned. And, presently, the wind blew fair, and, after watering, they set sail for their native land, arriving safe and sound, without further mishap. The merchandise they had recovered increased their

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capital tenfold, and this voyage procured them wealth and happiness. Glory unto God, the Master of the Worlds !

XXVII An old sailor once told me that the inhabitants of a considerable township in Dhaïf were compelled to emigrate, because of a serpent in their neighbourhood, which ate up their cattle, their horses, and them themselves. So the place was abandoned, and, since that time, has been deserted.

XXVIII According to the story told me by Abou-Mohammed, son of El-Hassan, son of Amr, a ship's-captain, driven before a violent gust of wind, was lucky enough to catch sight of an inlet, where he took shelter. There he spent a day and a night. And, during the morning of the next day, on the shore of the inlet, opposite them, what should they see but an enormous serpent, a fearful creature, of bigness beyond all words, which came down into the water, crossed the inlet, climbed up again on the other side and disappeared with the rapidity of a lightning-flash. Then, a little before dark, the monster returned, and crossed

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the inlet a second time, but this time slowly. Kept there by bad weather, the travellers witnessed that same spectacle five days running; the beast set out in the morning and returned during the afternoon. On the sixth day, the captain said to his people: "Do you land and discover where this serpent goes". So a number of the crew disembarked and, as soon as ever the serpent came back, walked inland about a mile. Thus they reached a marshy, damp thicket; and, lo, the thicket was encumbered by the tusks of elephants, big and little. They ran off and told the news to the captain, and, taking a party of his men, he hurried to the spot they indicated and carried back a load of ivory. For many days together the ship's company was busy, transporting the ivory from the marsh to the ship, making the most of the interval between the serpent's return and its setting out next day. Their profit passed all believing, and they cleared room for it in the ship by throwing overboard objects of lesser value and which they were less sure of selling. Twenty days longer they stayed in the inlet. This serpent, so it appears, used to prey on elephants and left the tusks there.

One day, I questioned Captain Ismaïlouïa about the foregoing story. It was in the year 339. "I have heard of it myself", he said. "It is perfectly true". There are also serpents in the sea of various kinds, but in the water they do very little harm. The most formidable kind

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are those which live in the mountains, in ravines, in desert places, where there is no water. In the Oman Mountains there are serpents which kill instantly. In the district, situate between Sahari, the port of Oman, and the mountains of Nahmed, there is a place where no man ventures ; it is called Serpent Valley. And there are serpents, so they say, a span long or even shorter, which double themselves up into a hoop, head to tail, and fly straight at a horseman ; their bite is instant death ; their breath blinds and is also killing. When a traveller adventures thither, they fly at him in crowds and do not miss, all along the road. And that is why no man crosses this region.

XXIX An old stager, who had travelled through Marekin, a city which lies one *parasang* from the sea-coast of the land of Ademiyoum, once told me that the mountains there are infested by serpents, grey or speckled in colour. Now if one of these serpents sees a man before the man sees it, that serpent dies ; and, similarly, if the man sees the serpent before he is seen, then it is the man who dies ; and, if they both catch sight of one another at the same time, then both of them die. That is the worst kind of serpent.

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XXX According to the story, told me by Mohammed, son of Bâlishâd, in the confines of Wâqwâq there are scorpions which fly about like sparrows ; when they sting a man, his body swells up, he falls ill, his skin peels off in ribbons, and he dies.

XXXI Ismaïlouïa tells me, and several mariners have confirmed his story, that, during the year 310, he set sail in his ship from Oman to go to Kabila. A storm drove him towards Sofala of the Zindjs. " Seeing the coast we had reached ", said the captain, " and realising that we had fallen among man-eating negroes, we had no doubt what our fate would be ; we performed our ablutions and turned our hearts to God, one to another reciting the prayer for the dead. The negroes surrounded us in their canoes and took us into harbour. There we cast anchor and went ashore. They led us before their king. He was a handsome, well-set-up young negro. He asked us who we were, and whither we were going. We replied that his territory had been our goal.

' You lie ', he said. ' It was by no means here you meant to land. The winds, and they alone, have driven you ashore, willy-nilly '. And

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when we had admitted that he spoke the truth, 'Bring ashore your merchandise', he said, 'and buy and sell. You have nothing to fear'.

So ashore we brought our bales, and started to do business ; and excellent business for us it was, with no restriction and no duties to pay. We made the king presents, and he replied with others, of an equal or of an even greater value. There we stayed several months. But, at last, the moment of parting came. We asked leave to go, and it was straightway granted. We put on board the goods we had bought, and concluded our transactions. And, as soon as all was settled, the king, hearing of our intention to set sail, bore us company down to the shore with some of his people, and, getting into the boats, they sped us as far as the ship. The king even came on board with seven of his attendants.

But, when I saw them there, I said to myself : 'That young king would fetch at least thirty *dinars*, if he were auctioned in the market-place at Oman, and his seven attendants a hundred and sixty *dinars* the lot. Their clothes are worth twenty *dinars* at the lowest. Altogether, we should make a profit of not less than three thousand *dirhems*, without stirring a finger'. Thus reflecting, I gave the crew certain orders ; sails were spread, and the anchor was hauled up. Meanwhile the king was behaving in the friendliest possible manner, exhorting us to return presently, and

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promising us a friendly reception. But, when he saw the sails swelling in the wind and the vessel already under way, his face changed. 'You are going', he said. 'Well, I will say good-bye'. And he made to climb down into his canoes, which were moored alongside. We cut their painters, and remarked: 'You stay where you are, with us; we are taking you home; and there we'll make it up to you for all your kindness'.

'Strangers', he said, 'when you happened on our shores, my people wanted to eat you and spoil your goods, as, in their time, they have done to others. It was I who protected you. I asked nothing of you. As a token of my goodwill, I came on board your ship to see you off. Then treat me as justice demands, and let me go back to my native land'.

But we paid no attention to what he said; little we cared. The wind freshened. Quickly the coast-line disappeared. Then night wrapped us in her veils, and we reached the high seas.

Day returned, and the king and his attendants were added to the other slaves, whose number was round about two hundred heads. He received no better treatment than the rest, his companions in captivity. He said no word, and never opened his mouth. He comported himself just as if we were strangers to him, and we knew not who he was. Once arrived at Oman, the slaves were sold and the king with them.

Well, some years later, sailing from Oman

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towards Kabila, the wind drove us a second time against the sea-coast of Sofala of the Zindjs, and we put in at exactly the same place. The negroes saw us, and surrounded us in their canoes, and we recognised one the other. Now we were quite sure of perishing and terror sealed our lips. Silently we performed our ablutions, and recited the prayers for the dead. We said good-bye, every man to his fellow. The negroes took and led us to the king's house. They made us enter. What was our surprise: there was the same king, him whom we had known, seated on his throne, as if we had left him there not long ago. Down we flung ourselves in his presence, and, sprawling, had not the strength to rise.

'Aha!' he exclaimed. 'My old friends!' None of us could find tongue to answer. We shook in every limb, 'Come now!' he continued. 'Lift up your heads; I grant you the *aman*, you and your goods'. Some of us raised our heads; but others could not, crushed by shame. And, for his part, he dealt with us kindly and graciously till we had all raised our heads. But, even then, we could not pluck up courage to look him in the face, so strongly did remorse and fear affect us. And, when, at length, we had come to our senses, reassured by his *aman*, 'Ah, traitors!' he cried, 'how did you treat me, after what I had done for you!' 'Mercy, King, have mercy!' we severally implored. 'I will be merciful', he

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said ; ‘ fall to your business of buying and selling as you did before ; you have full liberty to traffic ’. We could not believe our ears, and feared it might be a ruse to persuade us to unship our merchandise. Nevertheless, unship it we did, offering the king a present of incomparable value. He refused it, remarking : ‘ You are not worthy I should accept a present from you. I will not soil my fortune with anything coming from your hands ’.

Thereupon we went quietly about our business. The time of parting came, and we asked his permission to embark. It was given. When we were actually ready to go, I went to inform him of it. ‘ Go your way ’, he said, ‘ under the protection of God ! ’ ‘ O King ’, I answered, ‘ you loaded us with kindness and we requited you like graceless traitors. But how was it you escaped and managed to return home ? ’

‘ After you had sold me at Oman ’, he replied, ‘ my buyer took me to a city, called Basra ’ (and here he described Basra), ‘ where I learned the usage of prayer and fasting and some parts of the *Koran*. My master sold me to another, who took me into the territory of the king of the Arabs, to a place called Bagdad ’ (and he described Bagdad). ‘ In that city, I learned to speak correctly, and completed my education in the *Koran*, praying with the people in mosques. I saw the Caliph, whose name is El-Moqtadir. A year and longer I stayed in Bagdad, when there came a troop of men of

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Khorassan, riding camel-back. Seeing a great crowd of them, whither were they all going, I asked. To Mecca, they answered me. What was Mecca, I demanded. It was in Mecca, they replied, was the holy House of God, where Musulmans make pilgrimage. And they instructed me, concerning the history of the Temple. I should do well to follow the caravan, I thought within myself. But my master, to whom I communicated the circumstance, was neither willing to go himself nor to let me go of my own accord. So I found a means of eluding his vigilance, and mingling with the crowd of pilgrims on the road, I constituted myself their servant; I was fed and provided with the two garments, necessary for the *ibram*. In fact, under their guidance, I accomplished all the ceremonial observances of the pilgrimage.

Fearing to return to Bagdad, lest my master should kill me, I joined another caravan, going to Cairo. I offered my services to travellers, who, in return, gave me rides upon their camels and shared with me their food. Arrived at Cairo, I saw the great river, called the Nile. "Whence does it flow?" I enquired. "Its source", they replied, "is in the land of the Zindjs". "Whereabouts?" "Near a great city, called Assouan, on the frontier of the territory of the Blacks".

Hearing this, I followed the banks of the Nile, going from one town to another, and begging

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alms, which were not refused me. But I fell in with a troop of blacks, who used me ill. They bound me, and laid burdens on me, heavier than I could bear, among the other servants. I escaped, only to fall in with a second troop, who took and sold me. A second time I escaped, and thus travelled on, till, after many adventures of the same kind, at last I found myself in a country, which borders the country of the Zindjs. There I disguised myself; none of the terrors I had experienced, since leaving Cairo, equalled my terror, in approaching my own kingdom. For, said I, a new king has no doubt taken my place on the throne and with the army. To get back one's power is no easy thing. If I declare myself or am discovered, they will take and lead me before the new king, and I shall be slain out of hand. Or, it may be, a partisan of his will lop off my head, to curry favour.

So, a prey to the keenest terror, I travelled at night and hid by day. Reaching the sea-coast, I took ship, and, touching at various points, was finally landed one night upon the shore of my native land. I questioned an old woman. "The king who rules here, is he a just king?" I asked. "My son", she answered, "we have no king but God". And the good woman told me how the king had been carried off. I pretended the keenest astonishment, just as if the story did not concern myself and events of which I was so well aware. "The

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inhabitants of this kingdom", she added, "have agreed not to take another, till they have some definite news of the first. Sooth-sayers have told them that he is living safe and sound in the country of the Arabs".

When day dawned, I entered the city and made my way to my palace. There I found my family, as I had left them, but plunged in the greatest affliction. My people listened to my story with surprise and joy. Like me, they adopted the religion of Islam. Thus, a month before your coming, I took up my kingdom once more. I am glad and satisfied with the grace which God has accorded me and mine, instructing us in the precepts of Islam, the true faith, in the usage of prayer, fasting and pilgrimage, and in the knowledge of what is forbidden and what is allowed ; none other in the land of Zindjs has received such favour. And if I pardoned you, it was because you were the first cause of the purity of my faith. But there is still something on my conscience, of which I pray that God will wash away the sin'. 'What is that, O King?' I asked him. 'It is that I left my master, in Bagdad, without his leave, and that I never returned to his service. Could I but find an honest man, I would beg him to take my master the sum necessary to buy me off. If there was among you an upright man, if you were persons of respectability, I would give you the money to hand over to him, a sum ten times the sum he

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paid, as recompense for the delay. But you are no better than traitors and thieves'.

We bade him good-bye. 'Go', he said; 'and, if you come back, you shall have no different treatment; you shall have the best possible reception. Musulmans shall know that they may come to us like brothers, since we are Musulmans too. But as for speeding you to your ship, I have my reasons for staying where I am'. And so we parted".

XXXII As for soothsayers, they say that, in the land of the Zindjs, there are those who are extremely skilled in the art of divination. Ismailouïa tells me that a ship's-captain once told him the following story: "I was with the Zindjs in the year 332, and a soothsayer of the country asked me: 'How many ships are in your company?' 'Sixteen', I replied. 'Very well', he said. 'Fifteen of them will return to Oman safe and sound. The sixteenth will be wrecked and only three of its crew will be saved. After much hardship, they will regain their native land'.

Our sixteen vessels put to sea on the same day. Mine was in the rear, and I made the best speed I could to catch them up. But, on the third day, there appeared before us a massy shape, like a sort of black island. In my hurry, I neglected

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to let out the sails as I should have done, for navigation in that sea is a troublesome business, and unawares we were carried towards this mass, which ran against us violently. It was a sea monster. With a single stroke of its tail, it demolished the ship. I and two others escaped the catastrophe in a little boat. The sea threw us ashore on one of the Dibadjat islands, where we were stranded a year. We did not leave the island and return to Oman till we had undergone many sufferings. As for the other ships, by the grace of the Most-High, they all got back to port safe and sound ”.

XXXIII El-Hassan, son of Amr, and other persons who have travelled in India, have furnished me with a remarkable fund of information, regarding the birds of that country, of Zabedj, of Qomâr, of Senf, and of other regions which border on India. “ The biggest feather I have seen ”, said Abou’l-Abbas, of Siraf, “ had a quill about two ells long and capable of holding, so it appeared, a skinful of water ”. “ I saw in India ”, Captain Ismailouïa told me, “ a quill which belonged to one of the principal merchants and stood near his house. In it they poured water, as into a great jar ”. And, when I manifested some surprise, “ You need not be astonished ”, he

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added ;—" why, a sailor of the land of the Zindjs told me that, in the palace of the king of Sira, he saw a quill which held twenty-five skins of water ".

XXXIV Abou'l-Hassan Ali, son of Shâdân, of Siraf, informed me that a citizen of Shiraz told him that a village, near this city, had been deserted because of a bird. " When I asked him ", said Abou'l-Hassan, " how a bird could drive the population away, he replied :

'As far as I have been able to learn, an enormous bird lighted on the roof-top of a house in the village, broke the roof and fell down inside. The people there ran out, uttering yells of terror. Then the villagers assembled and, going in, found the bird entirely filling up the house. Since they had no other method of securing it, they killed the creature by dint of blows. It was naturally clumsy and could not take to flight. They drew its blood, carved its flesh, and divided the joints among the population. There was about seventy *rotls* weight for each man, not counting a portion of one hundred *rotls*, reserved for the *wakil* (headman) of the village, who was away, with three others, on the service of the Sahib of the town. It was upon the house of this same *wakil*

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that the bird had fallen. The villagers had the bird's flesh cooked during the day and ate it, together with their families and children. Next morning, they were all very ill. The *wakil* came back, heard what had happened, and he and his companions refused to touch the meat. As for those who had eaten of it, one after another they died, within three or four days. None of them were spared. So the village was empty; the *wakil* took himself off; and nobody has returned there since. It seemed to us probable that this bird was an Indian bird, and had eaten some venomous beast, whence the poison had infected its blood. Much weakened it had flown through the air, till its strength had failed it, and then fallen down on the roof'".

XXXV Many is the ship's-master, who has told me that he has heard tell, how, at Sofala of the Zindjs, are birds which seize an animal in their beak or claws, carry it up into the sky and let it drop again, to kill or break it; then they swoop down and devour it. In this same country of the Zindjs, there is, so they say, a bird which falls on huge tortoises, seizes them, carries them up into the air, and drops them against some rock, where they are broken. And, it is affirmed, that they eat as

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many as five or six in a day, if they can come by them. What is more, this bird flies away in terror, if it sees a man, so hideous are the men of that country.

XXXVI In the highlands of the Zindjs' country are rich-yielding gold mines. There, I am informed by Captain Ismaïlouïa, men search for gold by digging into the soil. And this work sometimes brings them to ground, excavated as if it were an ant-hill, whence, straightway, issue a horde of ants, big as cats, which devour and tear them in pieces. In the year 307, the Emir of Oman, Ahmed, son of Helal, carried among presents, which he was taking to the Caliph Moqtadir, a black ant, as big as a cat, shut up in an iron cage, and secured by a chain. The creature died on the road, in the neighbourhood of Dhou-Djabala. It was embalmed, however, and brought, in a good state of preservation, to Bagdad, that it might be viewed by the Caliph and the populace. Those who had had the carrying of it said that it was fed every day, morning and evening, with two *mannas* of flesh, cut up small.

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XXXVII Mohammed, son of Bâlîshâd, has told me that, according to reports, furnished him by persons who had touched on the country of Wâqwâq, there is to be found a large tree with round leaves, and stalks which bear fruit, similar to the pumpkin, but larger and offering some resemblance to the human face. As often as the wind shakes it, thence proceeds a voice. Inside it is full of air. And, if you pluck it, straightway out rushes the air and it shrinks to no more than an empty bladder. A sailor noticed this fruit ; it took his fancy, and he cut one, meaning to carry it away. But it immediately shrank, and what was left in the fellow's hands was of as much worth as a dead crow.

XXXVIII I asked Mohammed, son of Bâlîshâd, about monkeys, and what accounts of them he had heard. Many were the stories he told me, and, among others, he related how, in the neighbourhood of Sanfin, in the Lameri and Qâqala valleys, there dwell monkeys, which grow unusually tall and are divided in companies, each with its captain, the biggest of the troop. Now and again, they leave the woods and, infesting the roads and places where men pass, they stop travellers and will not let them

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go, until they have surrendered to them some part of their livestock, either a sheep, a cow, or other provision.

“And many are they who have told me”, continued Mohammed, son of Bâlîshâd, “that a troupe of monkeys have stopped the caravan, with which they were travelling, and torn their water-skins in pieces, while they were still far away from any watering-place. Finally, the travellers have made them some present, and, thereupon, the monkeys have allowed them to pass. But, for lack of water, most of the travellers have died. Only a handful have been able to reach the nearest watering-place.”

XXXIX The same informant has told me of the adventures of a sailor, who, in the year 390, embarked upon a ship which belonged to him and made the voyage to Qâqala. This expedition turned out well; they reached their destination, unshipped their cargo, and made to carry a part of it into a district, which lay about seven days' march from the coast. Meanwhile, they hauled up the ship, high and dry, in a little bay, where the sea could not harm it, and surrounded it with pieces of wood to shore it up.

“This done”, said the sailor, “there they left me as watchman, with a sufficient stock of

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provisions, and themselves set off for the town, where they stayed, busy about their buying and selling. When they had gone, I saw a troop of monkeys who came roaming round the ship and trying to climb on board. I drove them away with stones. A big she-monkey, however, had gained the ship. I sent her about her business, and thought her gone. But she eluded my vigilance and, climbing up upon the other side, she drew near me, just as I was eating my meal. So I tossed her a bit of bread and she ate it. Some time she stayed with me, then climbed down again and disappeared. That evening, back I saw her come, carrying in her mouth a cluster of twenty bananas. She gave a cry and I helped her up ; whereat, she set the bananas before me, ate, and, thereafter, did not go away. During the following days, she set off in like fashion, and returned, bringing bananas and other fruit she had picked in the woods. She spent the nights in the ship, by my side. She aroused my desires, and I satisfied my passion in her embrace. But three months had gone by, when I saw her grow heavy ; her gait became dragging. Great was my dismay ; she would be the shame of me, I reflected, when my companions came back and understood what had happened. The alarm I experienced inclined me to flight, and, taking the ship's dinghy, I furnished it with mast, sails, and an anchor, stocked it with skins of water, provisions, my clothes and all my belongings,

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and then, taking advantage of the hour when my she-monkey was absent, I got on board and launched forth, come what might, leaving the ship unguarded. An arduous voyage of twenty *zâmas*, which was nearly my death, brought me to the coast of one of the Armanan islands. There I stayed some time, to refresh myself, rest, and replenish my store of sweet water, bananas, and other fruit. Not a soul did I see, excepting fishermen who came down from among the trees. Once more I embarked, and sailed for about seventy days without any bourne or notion where I was going. And presently I chanced upon an island, called Bedfarkalah. A little later, I came to Kalah ; and, some time after that, I happened to meet the master of my ship and several of the persons who had embarked on it. They told me, that, being returned to the bay, they had found there, in the ship, a she-monkey, which had given birth to a monkey or two, human-visaged, the chest bare of fur, with ears shorter than have the generality of the monkey-tribe. They had not hesitated to assume that the sailor must be the sire of these little monkeys, and that he had escaped in the dinghy ; for there was nothing else missing from the ship, save only the dinghy and its gear. Others, however, were inclined to think that the she-monkey had made away with the sailor, and that the dinghy had been stolen by some passer-by or fisherman. The matter remained

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obscure. And, in conclusion, they had got rid of the mother and her brats."

The sailor who told me the foregoing story, added Mohammed, son of Bâlishâd, had very bad sight. He attributed this infirmity to his relations with the monkey; it had been aggravated further by a long life upon the sea.

XL A sailor has told me, how a ship, as it made the crossing from Oman to Senf, was lost at sea. Ten men only escaped in the long-boat, and the wind carried them onto the shores of an island, which was quite unknown. Thrown up upon the coast, there they stayed for the rest of the day, stupefied by the fears they had experienced and the sufferings they had undergone. At last, they took courage and, beaching the long-boat, spent the night in it. Next morning, they walked into the interior of the island, where they found an abundance of sweet water, the soil moist and well-shaded, and thick-growing trees which were laden with fruit, bananas in plenty, and sugar-canes. No trace of man could they find. And, after they had freely eaten of these fruits and drunk of this water, back they went to the long-boat, dragged it out of reach of the waves, and shored it up with pieces of wood. Then they wove it a protection against the sun with

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leaves of the banana and other trees, and made themselves an harbour at its side.

Now, five or six days later, what should they see coming but a troop of monkeys, advancing on them, headed by a monkey, bigger and taller than the rest. Opposite the long-boat, they paused. Struck by panic, the sailors climbed inside. No word did the monkeys say. The monkey-chief took up his stand, and deployed his forces to right and to left, like the general of an army. Presently, they returned, making him signs, as though they were imparting some piece of information; and, when evening came, they went away again.

The castaways were in a terrible state of perturbation, fearing that the monkeys would kill them. All night long, they turned over their chances of safety; they had no provisions; they knew not what path to follow; they were in a bad way indeed; and they saw no means of extricating themselves.

But in the morning a monkey came roaming round their camp, went away and came back with a companion. That last made gestures, as though showing them something. "I followed the monkeys", said the informant of the sailor, who told me the story, "till I saw them enter a thicket. There I stopped. I dared go no further, and went back again to my fellows. Next day, the whole troop returned, just as it had done the first time. Down sat the monkey-chief, not far from the long-boat, and deployed

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his comrades in the same fashion. And, soon afterwards, here came two monkeys, each carrying a nugget of the purest gold, which he flung on the ground before us. It was gold of an extreme purity, forming, as it were, thick roots. The delight it caused us did much to obliterate from our minds the painfulness of our condition.

In the morning, again a monkey came wandering round the long-boat. And, when it made to go, I followed it through the depths of the wood, and, emerging from the thicket, found myself in a plain, with black sand under foot. In front of me, the monkey started digging. I stopped, and started digging too. And what should I come upon, but roots of gold, interwoven like the meshes of a net. I tore them up, till my hands bled. Then I gathered together my spoil and carried it off, going back the way I had come. But the thickness of the wood led me astray. I climbed into a tree and spent the night there. Next morning, I saw the monkeys; as soon as they had gone past, I followed them, till I had caught sight of the sea in the distance. Thereupon, I waited, hidden among the branches of a tree, and, that night, when the monkeys had returned, I climbed down again and managed to rejoin my companions. They received me with tears of joy. 'We were sure you had perished', they exclaimed. I told them of my expedition and tumbled the gold beneath their eyes.

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This was but another source of misery and regret,—to think that, at the moment when we had attained to riches, we should have no means of carrying off our treasure. The long-boat was too small; there would be considerable danger of its foundering, if we loaded it with gold; besides, whither should we steer? Yet, in spite of all, we decided to go to the plain, dig up the gold there and carry it near the long-boat, trusting for our future in the will of God. Thus it was, that, taking advantage of the days when the monkeys did not come, we visited the plain in the morning, and, at nightfall, brought home the gold we had amassed. We buried the precious stuff, in a hole we had dug for that purpose, near the long-boat.

And so we did for the space of a whole year, at the end of which time we had got together a surprising hoard of gold. Meanwhile the monkeys did as before, coming one day and not the next. Our victuals were the fruit and water of the island.

Such was our case, when there appeared a ship, going towards Oman or Siraf. It had encountered a gale of wind, and been swamped. The crew had flung the entire cargo overboard; one by one, the larger number of its company had died of the sufferings they underwent. And, as soon as the residue caught sight of the island, they were anxious to land; their weakness, however, kept them

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where they lay. But, as they gazed upon the shore, they noticed us and our long-boat. Taking cables, several of them plunged into the sea and struggled to reach us. Seeing it, we also ran into the sea with cables, and, joining them, we knotted our ropes to theirs, and made them fast to the shore. Whereupon, two of us went aboard the ship, and there found the captain, sailors, and merchants, all half-dead from weariness and ready to succumb beneath the sufferings which had been inflicted on them by a stormy ocean, and the exhaustion, brought about by having to bale out the water, while they were upon the high seas. 'Get us ashore', they begged our companions, 'and take what is left of our belongings and merchandise'. 'Haul us ashore', added the captain, 'and take the ship for your own'. 'We can't agree to that', our people replied. 'But we'll drag you ashore, and you shall give us half the ship'. 'With all the pleasure in the world!' they answered as a single man. And, straightway, the agreement was ratified, in the presence of them all. 'One thing more!' pursued our fellows. 'What is it?' 'That we should be allowed to load our half of the ship with our cargo, without anybody seeing it or making any difficulty'. 'Agreed'. 'And, of course, it is understood that our cargo will not harm the ship or make it founder', they continued. 'Very well', said the newcomers, 'and we call God to witness

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that we owe to you the safety of all that the furious sea has spared us '.

Our companions landed again, and, at that moment, the troop of monkeys arrived. Seeing us pull on the cable to drag the ship ashore, they busied themselves, pulling by our sides. Quickly, we had drawn the ship in ; and the poor wretches on board flung themselves towards the land, like a lover on the object of his passion, so harshly had the sea dealt with them. Morning came, and we showed them the place where we were used to gather fruit. They ate and drank and plucked up spirit afresh. Next day, the monkeys returned with a present of gold, which we gave to the newcomers ; ourselves we had a sufficiency. Thereupon, we set ourselves to work, loading our gold into the half of the ship which belonged to us. The captain loaded the other half with gold, for himself and the merchants. And we victualled the ship with such provisions as the island could afford. Presently, a fair wind blew ; we set sail and reached the land of India. When the cargo had been shared out and each man had taken what accrued to him, every man's portion was a million, one hundred and forty-four thousand *mithcals*. Since that day, we have given up sea-faring."

And so ends the most surprising story I have heard, which has to do with monkeys.

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XLI A person once told me, that, in some town or other, at a merchant's house, he had seen a monkey which acted as his serving-man. The creature swept out the house, opened the door to visitors, shut it again, lit a fire under the pot, blew it up, added the necessary fuel, kept flies off the table, and fanned its master with a fan.

XLII A smith of 'Thafa, a city of Yemen, had a monkey, which worked his bellows all day long. Thus had it served him for five years. I have been there several times, and seen the creature in his house.

XLIII I have also been told the story of a monkey, which dwelt in the house of a citizen of Yemen. Its master one day bought a joint of meat, carried it home, and, by signs, entrusted it to the care of the monkey. But there came a kite, which snatched away the meat from under its eyes, to the monkey's great dismay. Now, in the courtyard of the house, grew a tree. Up into this tree climbed the monkey, right to the very top. There it

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turned bottom upwards, presenting its buttocks to the sky. It swung head down and laid hold with its two hands on certain portions of its rump. The kite supposed that it saw another piece of the stolen meat. Back it dropped again. The monkey nabbed it with both paws, and held it fast. Then down it climbed and secured the kite beneath a washing-tub, being careful to weight the tub with some heavy object or other. When the monkey's master came home and saw the meat gone, he ran upon the monkey to chastise it. Straight to the tub hurried the monkey, and drew out the kite. Its master understood what had befallen. He took the kite, plucked it, and nailed it against the tree.

XLIV There are other amusing stories told about the monkey-kind, and this is one of them.

A citizen of Ispahan, an old man who had travelled widely, relates that he was going to Bagdad with a large caravan, which numbered among others a young man as vigorous and ardent as any mule. The old man used to watch at night, that he might the better guard his luggage, and only slept during the march, while he rode his camel. One night, watching as his custom was, he saw this young man

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make his way towards a camel-driver who lay asleep, approaching him from behind, and start toying and tampering. The camel-driver woke up, flew into a rage, and drubbed him like a workman tanning leather. The young man regained his place, staggering from the thumps and buffets he had received, and there stayed quiet till he felt his strength revive. Then, noticing the camel-driver fall asleep once more, back he came and renewed his previous attempt. Again the camel-driver woke up, flew into an even greater fury, and gave him a terrible thrashing, so that the young man crept away half-dead. However, after lying down for some few minutes, a third time he approached the camel-driver, who set about him to such effect that he had the utmost difficulty in getting back to his place at all, dragging himself along the ground, this way and that, while, "By God", the camel-driver protested, "you try coming back again, and, I swear, I'll rip open your belly for you!"

As a witness of these different encounters, continued the old man, I could not help thinking that the camel-driver was within his rights; but I should have hated to see the young man killed. So, as soon as he had come to his senses a little, I called to him and said: "My son, what do you mean by behaving as I have seen you behave to-night? You have escaped from the hand of the camel-driver, but take care he doesn't kill you, and do be more restrained".

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“ Good God, Uncle ”, he replied, “ many is the night that I have lain awake and never once closed my eyelids, such is the fever of my blood and the fire which devours me. When I am at this pass, the brutality of the camel-driver is as nothing, compared to the torments I suffer ”.

“ My son ”, I answered him, “ we are but a couple of days’ march from the City of Peace (Bagdad), which will provide the wherewithal to cool your passions ”. Thus repeatedly I admonished him and, from a feeling of pity, I kept him at my side during the rest of the journey. Arrived in Bagdad, a keen anxiety on his behalf assailed me. “ Stranger that he is ”, I said to myself, “ a young man who has never set foot in the town before, who knows he may not cast his eyes upon some woman of the Caliph’s or the Vizirs’ households, and engage her as briskly as he engaged the camel-driver ? That would be the end of him ”. It was this consideration prevented my leaving him. I chose a lodging and installed him there with me ; and, once my luggage was carefully stowed, it seemed the first thing to do to take him visiting some bawd, who would, no doubt, be able to procure him a woman proper for satisfying his impetuous desires.

We had hardly travelled the distance of a street, when my young man stopped short. “ Uncle ”, he said, “ up in that window, I have just seen a face like the sun in fairness. Mine it must be ”. I dissuaded him from any such idea.

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But down he plumped upon the ground and swore that there he would die. "I looked after him in the desert", I reflected, "and shall I abandon him now in a city of perdition like Bagdad?"

Since I could not get the idea out of his head, I glanced about the street and saw a house which seemed the house of poor people. I knocked on the door, and an old woman appeared. I asked her to whom the other house belonged, where my companion had seen a woman's face. "It is the house of the Vizir So-and-So, and the young lady is his wife". "My son", I said to the young man, "do give up your plan and come with me, and I will show you the women of Bagdad. You'll see others fairer than this one". "I swear by God", he replied, "I'll either die or not go away without having her".

The old woman spoke. "Young man", said she, "what will you give me, if I manage it so that you get your own way?" Straightway he whipped out his purse from his girdle, and counted ten pieces of gold into her palm. Evidently she was delighted and, slipping on a cloak, left her house and knocked on the Vizir's door. The eunuch opened to her. She went in, and presently came back, saying: "I have settled your business for you and arranged terms". "And what are they?" enquired the young man, "Fifty *mithcals* for her, five for the service, and another five for

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the eunuch ". He paid over the sixty *mithcals*, and she returned to the Vizir's house, came back again and said: "Off you go to the baths, change your clothes, and between the sunset and the evening-prayer, be standing by my door till they can let you in".

The young man went away to the baths, dressed, and, at the appointed hour, took up his stand by the old woman's door. The eunuch appeared and let him in. He was shown into a well-furnished room, where he was served with an exquisite meal. He ate. They offered him drink, and he drank. Thereupon he made for the bed, and the lady did so too. Both of them had just slipped off their clothes, when a monkey came out from behind a curtain, advanced on the young man, scratching and tearing his thighs and other sensitive parts of his body. Blood flowed. He huddled on his clothes again, and, stupid with drink, tumbled down fast asleep just as he was, fully clothed. At the break of day, the eunuch woke him up and said to him: "Get away, before it is light enough to see faces ". So he retired, the prey of unspeakable mortification.

However, the old man, when he saw day dawning, said to himself: "I must go and see what has become of my young man, whether he got what he wanted, and if the affair has had a happy ending ". He found the young man, sitting on the old woman's doorstep, his head buried in his coat-collar, and fell to questioning

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him. The young man told him what had happened. Then he called the old woman, and told her the story too. The old woman went to the lady's house, that she might enquire the reason for this mishap. "You must know", said the lady, "that we overlooked one detail: we forgot to give the monkey, which belongs to the master of the house, its perquisite,—that is to say, a paper screw, containing a pound of sweets. But if the young man likes to try his luck again, we will only ask him the half of what he gave yesterday".

So the old woman brought her message, and the young man paid her thirty *dinars*, and was specially enjoined to bring with him that evening at the appointed hour a paper, containing a pound of sweetmeats for the monkey. Instead of one, the young man bought several. He was admitted, went in, was served as he had been served the night before, ate, drank, and, when he was about to take his pleasure with the lady, again the monkey flew at him. But the young man tossed it a bag of sweets, and the monkey picked them up and returned to its post.

His first ardour relieved, the young man began anew, and again the monkey appeared. A second bag of sweets diverted it, and this happened so often that at last the young man fell asleep, quite worn out. Then the monkey approached, roused him, and did its best to urge him towards the young lady, thrusting

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the while a finger into his clenched fist. The moral of the story is that, once the servant has been bribed, the master may be cuckolded under his own very nose. The monkey's gesture signified : " On with you, young man, on with you ! " And really he did not give the young man a moment's peace, continually inciting him to meddle with the young lady, till morning broke and the young man left the house and went about his business.

XLV Among the stories I have heard which deal with sailors and ship's-captains, here is the story which they tell about Captain Abhara. He was born in Caraman, first of all worked as a shepherd, and kept the sheep in some village of that country. Then he became a fisherman, and presently a sailor, on ships which trafficked in the Indian Ocean. Later still, he embarked on a Chinese vessel. Finally, he rose to be a captain, scoured the sea in its length and breadth and seven times made the voyage to China. Before his time, no one had ever accomplished this journey without accident. To reach China and not perish on the way, that, in itself, was regarded as a considerable feat ; but, to come back again, safe and sound, was a thing unheard of ; and I have heard tell that no one else, except only him,

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has made the two journeys, going and coming, entirely without mischance.

(Once, when his ship was wrecked), he spent several days in the sea, on his *matyal* (?) with a skin of water. And, touching that incident, this is what is related by Captain Shahriari, one of the sailors of the China seas :

“I was sailing”, he said, “from Siraf to China, and, betwixt Senf and the Chinese coast, not far from Sandal-Foulat, a promontory jutting into the Chinese Ocean, of a sudden the wind fell, leaving a dead calm. We anchored, and there stayed two days. On the third day, we caught sight of some object, in the distance, over the sea. I had the dinghy launched. And four sailors got down into it, with orders to reconnoitre this distant black mass. They set forth and returned.—‘Well, what is it?’ I asked them. ‘Captain Abhara’, they answered me, ‘riding on his *matyal*, with a skin of water’. ‘Then why did you not bring him in?’ I asked them again. ‘We wanted to’, they said, ‘but he replied that he would not come aboard our ship, except as its captain and pilot, and on condition that he took as his salary a thousand *dinars* worth of merchandise in the currency of Siraf’.

We were struck by these words, and I rowed out to him, with several sailors, and there I saw him riding the water, bobbing up and down at the caprice of the waves. We greeted him and begged him to come with us. ‘You

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are much worse off than I am', he said; 'my position is far less dangerous. However, I will consent to come aboard, if you give me a thousand *dinars* worth of merchandise, in the currency of Siraf, and leave the management of the ship to me'. 'The ship is richly laden', we said, 'both with merchandise and with valuables, and there is a large number of people aboard. It would be no bad thing to have Abhara's advice, even at the price of a thousand *dinars*'.

So he followed us, and got on board with the water-skin and the dinghy. Hardly had he arrived, when 'Now give me my thousand *dinars* worth of merchandise', he demanded. It was given him. He stowed it carefully, and 'Out of the way!' he ordered the captain. The captain retired, and gave up his place. 'To work', he continued. 'Let us not have it said that we wasted time'. 'But what must we do?' we questioned him. 'Throw overboard everything heavy'. So we lightened the vessel of half its cargo or more. 'Cut down the main-mast', he went on. And the main-mast was cut down and thrown into the sea.

When morning came, 'Cut the cable of the biggest anchor', he told us, and it was cut and the anchor left in the sea. Then, one after another, he made us cast other anchors. Thus six were lost. And, on the third day, a strange-looking cloud rose before us, and presently

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melted away into the sea, and the storm burst over us. Had it not been for the precautions we had taken, lightening the ship and cutting down the mast, we should have been swamped by the first wave which lifted us on its crest. The storm raged, without stopping, three days and three nights. The ship climbed and plunged, sailless, anchorless, driven we knew not where. But, next day, the wind slackened, and then there was a complete lull, and, at the end of the day, the sea was calm once more. From the morning of the fifth day, the sea was smooth and the wind favourable. We set up a new mast, stretched the sails, and the ship went forward again, spared by God. We arrived at the land of China, where the ship was repaired and a fresh mast made, in place of the mast we had cast into the sea. We stayed in China as long as was necessary for our commerce, and then set sail for Siraf.

Now, when we had come, according to our calculations, up with the place where we had originally taken Abhara on board, there we saw an island. 'Cast the anchor', said Abhara. That done, the long-boat was launched, and five men got down into it. 'Go to that island', he said, 'and bring back the anchor you find there'. And, in fact, the sailors did find an anchor, and brought it back.

And, on two further occasions, Abhara gave the same order, and three of the six anchors we had previously lost were recovered.

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Thence the vessel sailed on its way.

We questioned Abhara about this business of the anchors. 'When I met you', he said, 'it was the thirtieth day (of the moon), when the tide is highest, and your vessel was floating over this island. I made you throw the heaviest part of your cargo into the sea. Then, reflecting that, at a pinch, we could do without anchors in China, and that what was left of the merchandise was worth far more than the anchors, which were just as heavy, I made you throw them overboard too, since the ship must be lightened at all costs. Three of the six anchors stayed caught on the prominence of the island, and were saved for us, and three tumbled into the depths'. 'But how', he was asked, 'could you predict the fall of the water-level, and the storm?' 'I and others', he replied, 'have crossed this sea before; and we have noticed that on every thirtieth day (of the moon) its level drops in an extraordinary fashion, till it leaves these prominences uncovered. At the same time, a violent storm bursts, rising from the deep. The ship, on which I was sailing, was wrecked against one of these peaks. While we were spending the night on the island, the water rose again, and I escaped on this *matyal*. If you had stayed an hour longer at the spot where I met you before the storm, your ship would have struck and broken up'."

Abhara had travelled widely and had many

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adventures, of which this is one of the most singular.

XLVI A sailor has informed me that there runs between Khanfou, a township of Little China, and Khamdan, township of Greater China,—which of the two Chinas is the more remarkable,—a powerful-flowing river, broader than the Tigris at Basra ; and that, here and there, along the shores of this stream are mountains of lodestone. Thus it is that vessels which contain iron fittings cannot be used, since the mountains attract it. Horsemen, when they traverse these mountains, ride unshod horses ; their saddles have no iron trappings ; the horses' bits and the stirrups are made of wood.

XLVII I have it from a pilot, named Imran, son of the Lame One, that, being set out from Oman on a ship, together with several others which were going to Jeddah, in the year 325, they were overtaken by a violent storm and forced to throw into the water a part of their cargo. “ A number of ships ”, he told me, “ stayed behind and the others continued

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their voyage. When we were midway between Kamram and . . . (?) we encountered a frightful gale of wind, which snapped our anchors, drove us out of our anchorage, and carried us away. There were in our company several ships of Aden, Ghalafqa, and Athar, and, among others, a *djabala* of Ghalafqa, a magnificent vessel and quite new. I saw it driven by wind and waves onto a peak, jutting from the sea, and presently swamped. It capsized and those on board perished to a man."

XLVIII Among memorable stories which have to do with sailors, here is the story, told me about Merdabsha, one of the ship's-captains who sail to the pepper-growing lands and other parts. This Merdabshah had reached the age of seventy without begetting children. However, a child was born to him, whom he called El-Merzeban. It was his darling, and he carried it along with him on his ship and the mother too. Now, one day he was sailing in the Sea of Barnan, making towards Koulam, when he bade its mother, who was in the cabin, give him his child. So she put it in his arms, and he amused himself, dandling the nurseling and bouncing it up and down, till sunset. But, just at that moment, the wind began to blow a gale and one of the masts

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snapped clean off. He made as if to give the child back to its mother, and, in his hurry, dropped it overboard without noticing what he did. A storm blew up, and he was busied with the management of the ship, till the hour of the morning-prayer was come. At dawn the sea was calm again and the vessel once more at peace ; whereupon, he seated himself and asked them to give him back the child. " But you have had it since nightfall ", protested its mother. At these words, the old fellow tore his beard and beat his head. He searched all over the ship. " I must tell you ", the helmsman remarked, " that, ever since yesterday evening, the rudder has been heavy under my hand. Look at it ". They looked, and there, upon the front of the rudder, they noticed a mass which did not stir. It was the child ; straightway, a man climbed down and rescued the child, unharmed. He handed it to its mother, who offered the nursing her breast ; and the child fell to sucking peacefully. It was then fifteen months old.

" I used to know this Merzeban, the old man's child ", Ismailouïa informed, " when he was seventy years old and more. He had been haled before the Cadi of Oman as many as thirteen times, on some dispute about money, and all upon the same day. He passed, so they told me, for the least fair-dealing of captains. In his ship, he treated merchants, as men, who regard their obligations, do not treat them ".

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XLIX Many are they who have spoken to me about Saïd, the basket-maker, surnamed the Just, and related the origin of the fortune, which he left his children. These different narratives concur in the story I am going to unfold. Saïd was a man of holy life, who dwelt at Aden. He wove baskets and other utensils which are made of palm-leaves. He was an assiduous frequenter of the mosque, and offered up all his orisons there. And he had three sons, whose way of life was very little different from his own.

Now a sailor, of his acquaintance, had fitted out a ship to go to Kalah ; and, when he was upon the point of departure, he visited him and said : “ Give me some commission, I beg you ”. Saïd bought a green pitcher, worth half a *dirhem*, and a *daneq* of salt, which he put in the pitcher. “ There is my merchandise ”, he said. “ And what shall I buy you ? ” the sailor asked. “ Bring me home a blessing, as they say ”.

Well, the ship set forth, arrived at Kalah, and sold its cargo ; and the captain thought no more of Saïd’s pitcher. However, one day, when a new cargo had been shipped and their departure was imminent, the captain noticed a man in the market-place of Kalah, who held a fish on the end of a string and cried : “ Who’ll buy a Blessing ? ” At these words, the captain remembered the pitcher Saïd had given him. “ What is that ? ” he demanded of the man

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with the fish. "A kind of fish which fishermen call a Blessing", the fellow replied. "Good Lord", thought the sailor, "that must be what my friend Saïd meant". So he bought the fish for two *oques* weight of salt. He bade the huckster wait, and sent off a man to the ship, who brought back the pitcher intact. Then he handed over the weight of salt they had agreed upon, and carried the fish to his lodging. They prepared to salt the fish with the salt left in the pitcher. But, on cleaning it, they found some hard substance within, and, splitting it open, it was an oyster-shell they saw, and inside was a big pearl. "So that is what God has sent Saïd!" exclaimed the captain. The fish was duly salted, and the pearl set apart; they weighed anchor and the ship reached Aden without accident. The captain gave Saïd his pearl, but Saïd did not live long after receiving it. And, when he was dead, his youngest son possessed himself of it, and carried it to Sarra-manrâ, where he found the Caliph, who was then El-Motamed, to whom he sold it for an hundred thousand *dirhems*, though, in fact, it was worth more than twice as much.

L A native of Siraf relates how, while he was crossing from Siraf to Kalah, his

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ship foundered on the high seas, and he managed to save his life by clinging to a piece of wood. More than ten days was he afloat, and then was cast up upon an island, which was rich in abundance of trees, fruit, and bananas. There he stayed some time, eating the fruit he found and drinking from springs of sweet water. But, presently, he grew weary of the place, and set off, walking straight in front of him for several days. Thus he came to a cultivated region, where he found plantations of *dourah*, rice, and other useful vegetables. He caught sight of a hut and, drawing near, saw an empty water-cistern. He was tired out and entered the hut to rest. He was asleep, when up came a man, driving a yoke of bulls, laden with twelve skins of water, which he took and emptied into the cistern. Then he sat down to snatch a moment's rest. The traveller got up to drink the water. He examined the cistern and found that its walls were polished as smooth as the blade of a sword; yet it was neither made of pottery nor of glass. He questioned the man with the bulls about this cistern, and he answered him: "It is the quill of a bird's feather". The traveller was incredulous; the man went to the cistern and rubbed it within and without. Whereupon he saw that it was transparent and on both sides showed the trace of feathers. He added that there were birds whose feathers were still bigger.

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LI Now this is a fact with which sailors are perfectly familiar ; I have never yet met the man who questioned its accuracy.

A ship, bound for China, was wrecked upon the high seas. Six or seven of the company escaped death by clinging to the tackle. After some days, they landed on an island, where they stayed several months. They were nearly perishing of ennui, when, one day, while they lay discoursing together by the edge of the sea, they saw a bird light down on the ground, about the bigness of a bull. " We are sick of our life here ", they exclaimed ; " come, let us all engage this bird. If it kills us with its beak and claws, well, that will be the end of us ; but, supposing we manage to get the better of it, then we will cut its throat, and we can cook and eat it ".

So against the bird they rushed. Some of them clung round its shanks ; others fastened round its neck ; and others belaboured it with bits of wood. And thus they did, until it was dead. Then, knocking two stones one upon another, thence they fashioned knives, where-with they bled the carcase. They plucked it, kindled a bonfire, flung in the bird, turning it to right and left. And, when it was cooked, they sat on the ground and feasted on its flesh.

That evening, they regaled themselves again. But, next morning, going to the sea in order to perform their ablutions, and rubbing over

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their bodies, lo, all their hair fell off. Not a single hair remained upon their skin, and it became as smooth as the skin of a little child. There were three old men among their number, who found themselves grown equally bald. "It was the bird's flesh did it", they said, "and made our hair fall off. No doubt it was poisoned. We shall die to-day, every man, and see the end of our labours". Yet, in the evening they were still enjoying good health ; and so it was on the next day too, and on the days following. Five days later, their hair began to come back, and, at a month's end, it was as thick as ever, black and glossy, and showed no further signs of whitening. Then, a month after that, or thereabouts, they sighted a ship. They signalled to it, and it came to their rescue and took them off. They were all able to reach home and tell their story. Such an one, who had been known as an old man, coming back with a raven beard, was obliged to make himself known by particular marks he had on his body. And, thereafter, their hair did not grow white.

LII

A pilot tells me that, in the Sea of Samarkand—which is the sea bordering on Herkend, and so called, as they say, because the river of Samarkand runs into it,—there are to

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be seen many fishes of the kind named *Fal*, which is the biggest fish of the ocean. He himself had seen one, and put its length at two hundred ells. It could be seen from far off, and they took its flukes, lifted high out of the water, to be the sails of a ship, till they had drawn sufficiently close to distinguish them for what they were. On its back, was a mass of rubble and earth, which had accumulated during the years and formed a stony crust, so hard that neither iron nor anything else could make any impression. Around it, to right and to left, before and behind, swam a multitude of little fishes, which never quitted its side. They say that both the male and the female carry eggs in their belly, which grow larger there ; only, those of the male are sterile, while the female's produce young.

LIII Among the marvels of the seas is a bird, which dwells in the confines of Mait, an island near Senf and Serira. They say that it makes a nest at the entrance of some creek, lays its eggs therein, and sits hatching them forty days, at the end of which time it throws them into the water. There it stays twenty days, living on fish. And, when the twenty days have gone by, the little birds come out of the eggs and rejoin their parents, who foster

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them under their wings and feed them, till they have grown their plumage. Then the fledglings come and go, and pick up their food by themselves ; the parent birds leave them to their own devices. A brood never exceeds the number of three.

The inhabitants of the Isle of Maït say that never a ship puts in there. Such ships as make their way thither are driven by a violent gust of wind ; and, as soon as the ship is over against the land, the passengers all throw themselves into the water upon bits of wood and other objects which will support them, and the waves toss them about and, finally, roll them ashore. As for the ship, the sea carries it away, were it secured by an hundred anchors ; it is carried into deep waters and broken to pieces. Likewise the merchants' bales are cast up on the beach, where every man picks out his own again. And, when they wish to leave, they build a new ship. All goods taken into this country are carefully wrapped in skins, that the water may not spoil them, after the ship has split.

LIV Hassan, son of Omar, tells me that, in Mansoura, he saw people from Low Cashmere. Their country is situated a seventy days' journey by land from Mansoura. And

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they also come down on the Mihran, which runs from Cashmere, in as large a stream as the Tigris and the Euphrates in flood, on bales of costus, weighing each of them seven or eight hundred *mens*, and swathed in skins, smeared with pitch so as to make them waterproof. Of these bales, collected and bound together, they make a kind of raft, whereon they install themselves and float down the Mihran, putting in at the port of Mansoura, after a journey of forty days, without the costus coming to any harm by the water.

LV A person, who has lived in India, tells me that in that country there are charmers. Such an one of these charmers will go out into the country and, catching sight of some birds high up in the air, trace a circle beneath them. The birds fly about over the circle for a while, but presently tumble down into it ; and there they stay. Then the charmer enters his circle, takes the birds he wants and lets the others go. Likewise, he sees animals pasturing on the plain, compasses them from a distance with a line, walks round them, without their, any of them, being able to escape, and, entering, takes which he pleases.

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LVI Somebody, who had seen people of this kind at Dadaboura, once told me that such another charmer would go to the mouth of the river, carrying a piece of wood, over which he had performed some magic ceremony, and throw it into the water. The wood floated away, then, at a certain point, stopped and budged no further. The charmer got on board a skiff, went out to the place where the piece of wood had paused, drew thence a crocodile and slew it. The mouth of this river does, in fact, teem with crocodiles. And they say that the crocodiles never attack a man within the town ; but that, if a man goes without the town and so much as trails his finger in the water, he is snapped up by one of them. The citizens of Serira pretend that they have a talisman against crocodiles.

LVII Somebody, who encountered in India many persons addicted to divination, has related to me, how a native of Siraf, wishing to go from Sâmour to Soubâda by land, requested the governor to furnish him with a guide. The governor gave him one of his *bataks* or rural messengers ; and, with him, the Sirafian set out. Now, when they had come in view of Dhimour, they sat down by a *thelab*

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or pool, near a *djeram* or garden, to eat a bite ; and, among the food they ate, was something which contained rice. A raven croaked overhead. Said the Indian to the man of Siraf : " Do you know what that raven is saying ? " " No ", replied the other. " He is saying : ' I shall eat the rice you are eating ; never doubt it ' ". " That surprised me ", remarked the Sirafian, telling the story afterwards, " for we had finished the rice, and not a grain of it was left. We got up, and once more set forth. But, hardly had we covered two *parasangs*, when we fell in with a company of five Indians. As soon as the messenger saw them, he showed signs of the keenest perturbation. ' I am going to have a fight with those fellows ', he told me. ' Why ? ' I asked him. ' There is an old quarrel between us ', he replied. And scarcely had he told me what he meant to do before the Indians whipped out their *kbandjars*, hurled themselves against him all together, and made an end of him. They ripped open his stomach, and his entrails ran onto the ground. As for me, I was overcome by such terror as deprived me of the power to run away, and I tumbled to the earth, almost senseless. ' You needn't be afraid ', they assured me, and they left me there and went off. While they were going, a raven alighted upon the messenger's body, which I presumed was the same, whose croaking we had already heard. It set about picking up the rice, which ran out of his entrails ".

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LVIII Among curious stories, which have to do with merchants, travellers, and persons who have made their fortunes upon the sea, is that of Ishaq, son of the Jew. He got his living with the brokers at Oman, and, following a dispute which he had with a Jew, he left Oman and went to India. His sole property did not exceed a sum of about two hundred *dinars*, and, after an absence of thirty years, during which time no news of him was received, he came back to Oman, in the year 300, arriving from China, as I am assured by several sailors of my acquaintance, on a ship which belonged to him, as well as its entire cargo. In order to avoid the customs and the payment of the tithe, he came to an arrangement with the Governor of Oman, Ahmed, son of Helal, which involved a sum of more than a million *dirhems*. On a single occasion, he sold Ahmed, son of Merwan, a hundred thousand *mithcals* worth of musk of the finest quality, and the buyer judged that it was all he had. And, to the same buyer, he disposed of forty thousand *dinars* worth of striped stuffs, and, to another, twenty thousand *dinars* worth. And, at the plea of Ahmed, son of Merwan, he agreed to an abatement of a silver *dirhem* in the *mithcal*, thus writing off some hundred thousand *dirhems*.

Such a prodigious fortune made a noise about the country, and roused the envious. A

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mischievous person, whose request had been refused by Ishaq, went to Bagdad and, seeking out the Vizir, Ali, son of Mohammed, son of El-Farat, laid false information before him against the Jew. The Vizir turned a deaf ear; whereupon, the fellow addressed himself to one of the familiars of the Caliph, Moqtadir-Billah, assumed a sanctimonious air, and related his version of the Jew's history. A man, he said, had left Oman without anything, and had come back on a ship, laden with a million *dinars* worth of musk, as well as silks and porcelain of equal value, and quite as much again in jewellery and stones, not counting a whole heap of marvellous objects of Chinese workmanship. The possessor was an old man without children, he added. Ahmed, son of Helal, had levied a toll on him of five hundred thousand *dinars* worth of merchandise. All this was duly reported to the Caliph, who was much surprised and straightway despatched one of his eunuchs, called Black Pepper, with three attendants, bearing a message to the governor, bidding him give over the Jew into the hands of the eunuch, and to himself send him a messenger. And, when the eunuch had arrived at Oman and Ahmed, son of Helal, was informed of the Caliph's orders, he commanded that the Jew was to be seized, meanwhile secretly warning the merchants of it, letting them remark how the Jew's arrest threatened them all, whether they were

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citizens or strangers, doing business there, who were thus exposed to the envy and malice of every miserable wretch. And, thereupon, the markets closed. Papers of protest were signed by the people of the town and by strangers, declaring that, after the Jew had been arrested, ships would no longer put in at Oman, the merchants would leave, and that they would advise others by no means to land on the coast of Iraq, where a man's property was not safe. They added that Oman was a town, wherein dwelt many rich merchants of great substance, from every land, and that they had no other safeguard, besides the continuance of the Caliph's justice and the justice of his Emir, his consideration for merchants and the protection he afforded them against envious and mischievous people.

The merchants made an uproar in the city, set up a cry against Ahmed, son of Helal, and began a disturbance, to such effect that Black Pepper, the eunuch, and his henchmen, were inclined to take their departure and bade the governor good-bye.

Ahmed wrote to the Caliph and told him what had passed, as how the merchants had brought their ships to the quay-side and put on board their goods, with the purpose of removing them, and how the business men, who lived in the city, had been in the greatest perturbation and had exclaimed : " We shall be deprived of all means of livelihood, when ships put in

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here no more ; Oman is a place, whose citizens get everything from the sea. Sultans are like fires, which eat up all they touch. We can't resist them, and our best plan is to take ourselves out of their way ”.

The eunuch and his men squeezed two thousand *dinars* from the Jew, and then retired. In his indignation, the Jew hurried all his possessions together, put them on ship-board and set sail again for China, without leaving a *dinar* behind in Oman. At Serira, the governor asked him a trifle of twenty thousand *dinars*, as his due, on the condition he let him pursue his way to China. The Jew refused to give a penny ; so the Sahib sent secret agents against him, who killed him. And he possessed himself of his ship and all his goods.

Ishaq had stayed three years at Oman. Persons, who saw him there, tell me that, on the day of *Mibrdjan*, he made Ahmed, son of Helal, the present of a vase of black china, shut with a lid of gold. “ What is in this vase ? ” Ahmed asked. “ A dish of *sekbadj* I cooked you in China ”, replied the Jew. “ *Sekbadj* cooked in China ! Two years old ! It must be in a bad way by now ”. Ahmed took off the lid and opened the vase. There was a golden fish, with ruby eyes, garnished with musk of the finest quality. The contents of the vase was worth fifty thousand *dinars*.

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LIX Among the curiosities which the Jew related of China, I will set down the following :

“I visited,” he said, “a town of that country, called Lauin. To get there, you have to cross a range of precipitous mountains. Merchandise is carried thither on the backs of goats, for the road, which traverses these abrupt heights, resembles a series of stairways, that only goats are capable of negotiating. The King of Lauin was a prince both powerful and respected. When I presented myself before him, he was seated on a golden throne, set with rubies, and was himself loaded with jewellery, just like a woman. His queen was at his side, even more richly tricked out. Round his neck were chains of gold and emeralds, of inestimable price, of such as the kings-of-kings of East and West have not the equal. Near him, stood some five hundred young girls of every colour, dressed in silk, with ornaments. He greeted me. ‘O Arab’, he asked me, ‘have you seen anything finer than this?’ showing me one of his chains, incrustated with precious stones. ‘Yes’, I answered him. ‘How is that?’ ‘I have a pearl of incomparable worth’, I continued, ‘which I bought at a great price to do you homage’. ‘Quick! Go and fetch it’, he ordered. ‘That was my sole purpose in coming here’, I went on, ‘and to-night I . . .’ ‘No! No!’ he interrupted me, in a pleased and

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satisfied tone. ‘Bring it here now ! At once !’ As a matter of fact, I had ten of them. I ran off to my lodging and, taking nine, I pounded them, under a stone, to a powder the consistency of flour, and scattered it upon the ground. The remaining pearl I wrapped in a handkerchief, and, winding it round and round several times, and knotting the handkerchief carefully, I took it to the king. Arrived in his presence again, I began to undo the bundle, untying and unwrapping it very slowly. The king drew near, and the queen stood over me, bidding me hurry. At last, I set the pearl under their eyes. The king knelt down before it, and so did the queen. They bought it from me, at an exorbitant price”.

LX Sailors are generally agreed that the Sea of Berira, which stretches for seven hundred *parasangs* and is on the way to the land of the Zindjs, is among the most dangerous of seas. On one side is a range of big islands, where the current runs very strong. Ships cross it in seven or eight days. When a ship goes ashore in the confines of Berira, the blackamoors geld its company. And, when merchants journey to Berira, each of them, according to his means and the position he occupies, takes with him an escort for his

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protection, lest the natives seize and geld him. These negroes make a collection of the proceeds of such onslaughts upon travellers. They keep them, and flaunt them about to excite one another's envy. With them, a man's prowess is adjudged from the number of travellers he has dealt with in this fashion.

LXI Among seas which are difficult, dangerous, and where navigation is a troublesome business, whence the issue is hard, comes the sea of the *gobbs* of Serendib, which measures three hundred *parasangs* long. It abounds in crocodiles. The shores are infested by tigers. It is scoured by big craft, and the pirates, who man them, attack ships and eat men falling into their hands. The natives of this coast are quite the wickedest of all mankind ; nowhere else do you find the like. A nasty place ! Is a ship, crossing these seas, captured by the pirates, the men are taken and eaten ; does it founder, its shipwrecked crew is eaten by the crocodiles ; and, supposing it is wrecked near the land, do the poor wretches manage to get ashore, they are the prey of tigers, who rend them to bits in an instant.

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LXII Touching singular customs, widespread throughout India, Hassan, son of Amr, tells me that he heard a sheik, a well-informed man, who had travelled the country, relate the story which follows.

One of the great kings of India was sitting down, taking a meal. Before him was a parrot in its cage. Said the king : " Come and eat with me ". " I am frightened of cats ", replied the parrot. " No matter ", answered the king. " I will be your *balâudjer* ",—that is to say, in the Indian tongue, " I engage myself to suffer the like of anything that may happen to you ". And this is how the above expression was explained by the old man. The kings of India have about their persons a company of men, which is more or less numerous, according to their degree of magnificence and the consequence of their state. These men say to the king : " We are your *balâudjers* ". He makes them eat rice with him, and gives them betel from his own hand. Each hacks off his little finger, and sets it before the king. And, from that moment on, they follow him about, wherever he goes, eat what he eats and drink what he drinks. They superintend his food, and overlook everything which has to do with him. No concubine is brought to his bed, whether it be girl or boy, but they, first of all, examine them thoroughly ; no carpet is spread for his feet, till they have inspected it. The

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king is served with no drink nor dish, but they insist it should be, first of all, tasted by whoever brings it. And thus they do, in every instance, where the king might be exposed to some danger. If he dies, they commit suicide ; if he burns, they cast themselves into the flames ; if he falls ill, they mis-handle themselves in order to share his sufferings. When a battle is fought, in the attack, they cluster round him and never leave his side. Only men of distinguished family, who are themselves comely and valiant and of good understanding, are admitted among the *balâudjers*. And that is how the word *balâudjer* is explained.

So when the king said to the parrot : “ I am your *balâudjer* ”, he also took and ate a little of the parrot’s rice. And, without hesitation, the bird hopped down from his cage, and set himself at table with the king. Along came a cat and snapped off the parrot’s head. The king took the parrot’s dead body, and laid it in a porcelain vase, together with camphor, aromatic spices, betel, chalk, and pepper. Then he beat on a drum, and traversed the city and the ranks of his army, carrying this vase in his hand. And, thereafter, so he did every day, going through his dominions with the vase. And this went on for years. At last, his *balâudjers* and other important subjects of the kingdom approached him and said : “ Your behaviour is unseemly. It has gone on too long. Do your duty, or we shall be obliged to

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arrange for your deposition and take another king ". And, in fact, whoever says, " I am your *balâudjer* ", and fails to comply with the obligations he has thus imposed upon himself, such a man becomes, according to the usage of the Hindus, *bahinda* or *ahinda*, which, in their parlance, is the name given to any man who, by reason of weakness, inability, or baseness of spirit, does not fulfil his obligations. Kings are no more exempt from this rule, than other men.

So, when the king saw this, he dug a pit and filled it with aloes wood, sandal, *salit*, set fire to it and flung himself therein. He was burned, and his *balâudjers* jumped in and were burned with him, to the number of some two thousand. And thus it came about, all because the king had said to his parrot : " I will be your *balâudjer* ".

LXIII The same informant has told me, that, in Serendib, the kings and their train have themselves carried about in *bandouls*, which resemble a litter and are borne upon the shoulders of several footmen. At the side, a servant carries a golden plate, containing leaves of betel and anything the occupant needs. And thus he goes his round of business, among his attendants, seated in the equipage described above, chewing betel and spitting into a

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spittoon. And, as often as the need comes upon him, out he gets from his *bandoul* and relieves nature, just wherever he finds himself, without pausing, as he walks along the road; and, when he has done, he puts his member away again, without bothering to wipe it dry.

LXIV And Hassan, son of Amr, also told me that, at Sendan, he had seen a Hindu, as he was going close by some house, get his clothes and body wet with urine the people of the house were throwing out. He stopped and “Ugh!” he cried, “was that water somebody has washed his hands in, or used to rinse his mouth?” For it is that they consider filthiest. He was answered that, no, it was the water of a child. “*Kanna*”, he remarked, which is interpreted “Well and good!” and so went on his way. In their estimation, urine is less nasty than water in which the hands or the mouth have been washed.

LXV And, as often as a native of this country has relieved a necessity of the major order, he goes, to put himself to rights, down to the *thaladj*, a pool, fed by the rain-water

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which flows from the mountains and the plain, in bad weather, and, once his business is done, he takes a mouthful of this water, gargles, climbs out of the water, and spits his mouthful back into the pool.

LXVI The same Hassan has told me that, according to someone who had been to Serendib and had stayed there, the king has a customs-house, established on the coast, where merchandise is assessed for the duty it has to pay.

LXVII A sailor has given me an extraordinary account of the serpents of Koulam-Meli. There is one, called the *nagheran*, which bears a green crest upon its head, shaped like a cross. This reptile rears its head an ell or two from the ground, according to its size, and swells it, beneath the scales, till it has attained to the bigness of the head of a dog. When it is in flight, none can overtake it; when it is in pursuit, none can escape. When it bites, it kills. At Koulam-Meli dwells a Musulman, a man of holy life, in Indian parlance called Bensi, who heals this serpent's bite.

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Nearly all his patients recover. He also gives treatment for the bites of other serpents and vipers. Magicians, of course, are not lacking among the Indian ; but the magical treatment of the Musulman is invariably successful.

“ One day ”, the sailor told me, “ I was in his company, when they brought him a man who had been bitten by the *nagheran*. There was also an Indian, whose magic learning was renowned; he set to work, casting spells for the recovery of the wounded man. The Musulman, on his side, cast spells for the fellow’s death ; and, sure enough, he died ”.

LXVIII Under other circumstances, I have seen the Musulman heal not a few, who had been bitten by this serpent or by some other. In Koulam-Meli is a kind, which is little and has two heads, one smaller than its fellow. They call it *batar*. When it gapes with its littler mouth, you would say it was the beak of a sparrow. If it bites with either head, it does so in the flickering of an eyelid.

LXIX “ I have made in a *gobb* of Serendib ”, Mohammed, son of Bâlishâd, told

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me, "curious observations to do with serpents and magicians. When a man is bitten by a viper or by a serpent, the magicians perform over him, and, supposing their treatment does not produce good results, they place the sick man in a litter of branches and push him out into midstream of a river, which flows through their country towards the sea, and along which their houses are built or the houses of most of them, at least. Since everyone knows that only persons suffering from snake-bite are put in such a litter, everybody who is at all versed in magical arts draws it ashore and performs magical operations over the patient. If the operation succeeds, then the man gets up and goes home upon his own legs. And, if it is unsuccessful, he is once more pushed out into the stream; and thus it goes on, all along the banks of the river, till he has traversed the entire country. Then, if none of the magical operations he has undergone have proved efficacious, the sick man is carried down to the sea, where he is drowned, unless he has previously been able to get up. For it is not the usage that he should be left on dry land, nor that his family should shelter and nurse him. If he takes a turn for the better, he goes home on foot; if the enchantments, to which he is subjected, profit him nothing, then he disappears".

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LXX “ Once upon a time ”, Moham-med, son of Bâlishâd, also told me, “ I was passing close by one of the rivers of the *gobbs*, which flow into the sea, and where the ebb and flow of the tide is particularly strong. The tide was at its lowest, and the beaches on either side were quite uncovered. On the level of the water, sitting upon the sand, I noticed an old woman, very decently dressed. ‘ What are you doing there ? ’ I inquired of her. ‘ I am an old woman ’, she replied ; ‘ I have had my bellyful of this world, and now I want to rest in the bosom of my Lord.’ ‘ But why ever are you sitting here ? ’ ‘ I am waiting ’, she said, ‘ for the tide to come back and take me off ’. And so she stayed, squatting down in the same place, till the tide came in again and overcame and drowned her ”.

LXXI A traveller told me that, in India, he had seen a succession of people come down to the water to drown themselves. They hired someone to drown them, lest their fright, and the perturbation they were in, should prevent them committing suicide of their own accord. Each of them paid a fellow to put his hand on their head and keep it under the water till they were drowned. If they yelled out and

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begged for mercy, the fellow took care not to heed them.

LXXII A traveller, who had penetrated the land of Sahal, told me that, in the Island of Baqar, situated between the Island of Serendib and Mandourin, which is one of the principal islands in the vicinity of Sehilan (Ceylon), he had seen a monstrous Indian idol; and the Indians said that this idol of the Island of Baqar stayed a thousand years in each island, and was then transported to another.

LXXIII “ At Serira ”, Mohammed, son of Bâlîshâd, has informed me, “ I saw a woman who was carrying a creature of human visage, only that its face was black like the face of the Zindjs, and its feet and hands were longer than those of a man. This animal had a long tail and fur like a monkey. It was sitting on the woman’s knees and nozzling against her. ‘What’s that?’ I asked her. ‘An animal which lives in thickets and in trees’, she replied. It kept up an unintelligible whimper. Though evidently related to the monkey, it

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had the visage and the general conformation of a man."

LXXIV I learn from the same informant, that, in the island of Lâmeri, are camelopards of an indescribable bigness. They say that some shipwrecked men, who were obliged to go from the confines of Fansour towards Lâmeri, refrained from travelling at night for fear of camelopards. During the day there was no sign of these creatures ; but, as night drew in, the travellers took refuge in a big tree ; and, night being come, they heard them roaming round, and, by daylight, could see their traces in the sand.

There is also a terrible plague of ants in these islands, particularly in the Island of Lâmeri, where they are of an enormous size.

LXXV The same informant tells me, that he has heard tell by a sailor, that at Louloubilenk, which is a bay in the coast, dwell a cannibal tribe, and that these anthropophagi have tails. They live between Fansour and the land of Lâmeri.

In the Island of El-Neyân, which is an island

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of the Outer Sea, two hundred *parasangs* distant from Fansour, are also cannibals. They collect human skulls and glory in the number they manage to accumulate. They pay a very high price for ingots of brass : brass, in their country, has the lasting and durable qualities of gold with us, while gold, with them, is no more lasting or durable than brass with us. Blessed be God, the Best of Creators !

Beyond the Island of El-Neyân, there are three islands, called Beraua, also inhabited by a people which eats human flesh ; they keep the skulls and put them to various uses.

All the tribes, which inhabit Fansour, Lâmcéri, Kala, Qaqala, Daïfar, and other countries are anthropophagi,—with this difference, that they only eat their enemies, and that from vengeance and not from greed. They cut up human flesh into long, thin strips, which they dry and prepare in various ways.

LXXVI I have it from the same informant, that the inhabitants of the Ladjialous Islands, a numerous group of islands which stretch for a distance of eighty *parasangs*, go out to meet ships and barter with goods from hand to hand. If a piece of merchandise is left with them, before the exchange has been completed, they run off and you can never get it back.

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As often as a ship is wrecked upon their shores, and a man or woman is cast up there, if the shipwrecked person has managed to save something or other, and is holding it in his hand, they do not despoil him ; for it is their practice never to take anything from the hand of a person who is cast up amongst them. They receive the stranger in their house, make him sit down, give him to eat whatever they are eating themselves, and do not eat, on their side, until their guest has satisfied his hunger. Thus they treat him, till such time as a ship puts in. Then they conduct the stranger on board, ask him to remunerate them and take what he gives. Now and again, it happens that a man, whom chance has thus thrown into their midst, finds some means of doing them a service and, with trifles, is able to buy ambergris of them, which he stores up till a ship comes by. In this way, his sojourn among them is turned to some profit.

LXXVII A traveller, who had penetrated the land of India, once told me that, according to what he had heard said, the finest diamonds, the most beautiful and the most precious, are derived from the territory of Cashmere. There is a gorge, between two mountains, where burns a fire, which never

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dies down, neither by day nor by night, summer nor winter. And, in this gorge, are the diamonds. Only Indians of the baser sort adventure themselves in this perilous country. Banded together in troops, they gain the approaches of the gorge, and, slaughtering lean sheep, they cut the flesh up small and throw it into the gorge by means of an invention of theirs. For several reasons, they cannot enter the gorge themselves. First of all, there is the ever-burning fire ; and, moreover, there is also an indescribable number of vipers and snakes, so many that no living thing could pass them and survive.

And, as soon as they have thrown the meat in, there alight a horde of eagles, which seize the meat, whenever it falls clear of the fire, and carry it off. They follow the eagles' flight. Sometimes, a diamond falls from the piece of meat which is being carried away. The eagle settles, here or there, to make its meal. Thither they go, and collect the diamonds. If the meat falls into the fire, it is burned. The eagle, which tries to snatch a bit of meat too near the fire, is also burned. And it occasionally happens, that an eagle catches a piece of meat while it is flying through the air, before it has touched the ground.

So that is how the diamonds are collected. Most of those, who undertake the gathering of them, perish by fire or by the vipers or the snakes. The monarchs of those parts are great

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lovers of diamonds, and recruit men for the trade. They spend much energy in getting them, because of the sparkle of the gems and the high prices they fetch.

LXXVIII A traveller once told me, that a Chinese king showed him round a garden at Khanfou. "This garden", he said, "was twenty *djeribas* in extent. There I saw narcissi, anemones, roses, and a thousand other kinds of flower. I was amazed to see flowers of every season, blooming all together in the same garden. 'You like it?' he inquired. 'I have never seen anything prettier or more charming', I replied. 'All you see', he continued, 'trees and flowers both, is made of silk'. And then I realised that these flowers, these roses, were made of Chinese silk, woven, plaited, brodered, and worked in a myriad different ways, but so cunningly that, at first sight, you would never doubt but they were real flowers and trees".

LXXIX At Andaman-the-Great is a golden temple which encloses a tomb, an object of great reverence to the inhabitants.

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It was their reverence for this tomb which induced them to raise the golden temple over it. Thither go the inhabitants of the two islands in pilgrimage. They say that this is the tomb of Solomon, son of David,—God bless them, one and the other!—and they add that the king prayed God to place his tomb in a spot where the men of those times could not go, and that God heard his prayer and put it in their island. To this day, in fact, no one has ever touched at Andaman; no one, at least, has ever returned to tell the tale. But a comrade, who had made the voyage to the gold-bearing lands, once told me that, at Safir, he had seen a man, who said that he had landed at Andaman with a ship's crew. The rest were all eaten, and he alone escaped; and to him we owe the information given above.

LXXX Many are the sailors, who have spoken to me about that famous pearl, renowned under the name of *yetima* (orphan), because there is not another like it in the whole world. Here are details of its history, as I have heard them told. At Oman, there dwelt a man, called Mouslim, son of Beshar, a person of great piety and exemplary conduct, whose business it was to furnish divers for the

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pearl fishery. Some fortune was his, but his affairs with the pearl divers turned out so badly, that he dissipated all his substance and, one fine day, found himself entirely without resources, without victuals or clothes, without any single object in his possession which he could put to account, save only a bracelet, worth a hundred *dinars*, which belonged to his wife. "Give it me", he said, "that I may employ its price fitting out a fresh gang of divers; perhaps it may be, that God will send a piece of luck our way". "Good Lord", his wife retorted, "we have nothing left to live on; we are reduced to beggary. At least, let's use the money we get for this bracelet to live on, and not throw it away into the sea".

But her husband knew how to cozen her; he wheedled the bracelet from her, and took and sold it. The entire sum was employed in fitting out divers, with whom he departed to the fisheries. It was agreed, that they should fish for two months and no longer. So, for fifty-nine days, his men dived, collected oysters, opened them and found nothing. And, upon the sixtieth day, they dived in the Devil's name,—may God damn him!—and this time they brought up an oyster, which contained a pearl of great value, worth, perhaps, the amount of Mouslim's possessions from the day of his birth to that very day. "Look", exclaimed the divers, "what we have found in the Devil's name!" Mouslim took the pearl,

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ground it to powder, and flung it back into the sea. "Well", the divers remarked, "that's how you behave, is it? Here you are, without anything, in the last stages of poverty; a magnificent pearl comes your way, one worth thousands of *dinars*, perhaps, and you grind it to powder!" "Glory be to God", he answered them. "Should I have done right to make my profit from something, got in the Devil's name? God would not bless it. It was to tempt me he let fall this pearl into my hands. If I had kept it, you would have followed my example, all of you, and only dived in the Devil's name,—a terrible sin, for which no profit could make up. By the One God! I could not wish all the pearls in the sea at such a price. Go now, dive again, and say: 'In the name of God and by his blessing!'"

So the divers obeyed him, and dived again. And the sunset prayer of that same day, which was the last of the sixty, had not yet gone by, when they had laid their hands on two pearls, of which one was the *orphan* pearl and the other a pearl of far lesser value. Mouslim took them to the Caliph Rashid, and sold him the *orphan* pearl for seventy thousand *dirhems*, and the smaller for thirty thousand, and went home to Oman with a hundred thousand *dirhems*. There he built himself a great house, bought slaves, and accumulated landed property. His house is well known at Oman. And that is the story of the *orphan* pearl.

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LXXXI Younis, son of Mehran, of Siraf, the merchant, who has visited Zabadj, tells me : “ In the capital city, where Mahradj, King of Zabadj, has his residence, I saw innumerable streets, given over to trade. In the Street of the Changers, I counted as many as eight hundred changers, besides those who are scattered here and there through the other streets ”. He added much else, with regard to this island, the buildings, and the incredible number of its towns and villages.

LXXXII One of my acquaintance has told me the following charming story.

“ I was on board a ship ”, he said, “ going from El-Aylah to Biârah, when such a blustering wind got up and the sea ran so high, that we tore off our garments and abandoned any hope of safety. Now, there was with us in the ship a woman, who carried a little child. Till that moment, she had stayed very quiet ; but, as soon as matters began to take a serious turn for us, far from losing her composure, she fell to laughing and dancing her baby up and down. While we still despaired of our lives, was not the moment to question her. Once we had reached the *shott* and were out of danger again : ‘ Woman ’, said I, ‘ what

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persuaded you to laugh and dance your baby when we were in mortal peril? Weren't you as much afraid of drowning as we were?' 'If you were to learn my story', she replied, 'you'd be surprised and, what's more, you'd understand how it was I kept so calm and why the storm did not frighten me'. 'Tell us your story', we cried. 'I am from El-Ayla', she said. 'My father had a friend among the sailors, whose ships make the crossing from Oman to Basra and Basra to Oman. As often as his ship was coming from Oman and touched at our town, this friend of ours came to see us, brought us little presents, and stayed with us till his ship left; we made him presents too, such as we could afford. He was a good man. My father gave him me in marriage. After three years, my father died, and "Come; I'll take you to Oman", said my husband, "where are my mother and my family". So I went with him to Oman, and there I stayed with his family the space of four years. And he sailed backwards and forwards between Oman and Basra, as usual. Then he died at Oman, five months after the birth of this child. When the period, fixed by law, was over, I grew tired of Oman. I had only stayed there because of my husband. "I want to return to my family, at El-Ayla", I said to his mother and his relatives. "If you'll stay with us", they replied, "we will go shares with you; we have no other child but yours". Thus did they

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urge me to stay, but I refused them. Just before leaving, I bought the child a cradle, solidly made of bamboo, and I packed inside clothes of his and mine and certain provisions, all covered up and neatly arranged, and put the child on top.

I embarked upon a ship, going to Basra. During the voyage, we were overtaken by a storm. In the darkness of the night, the ship went to pieces. Passengers and sailors were scattered, here and there, in the water, and no one could see his fellow. As for me, I kept afloat till the morrow midday, on a plank to which I clung. A passing ship sighted us. The captain rescued some dozen castaways from the water, and I was one of them. Once on deck, they hung us upside down, that we might throw off the water we had swallowed, and, then, gave us a cordial to drink ; and so they tended us till next day, and we were ourselves once more. I had been so much shaken by my experience, that the recollection of my child had quite slipped my head, when I heard the captain say : “ Find out if this woman here has any milk ; else, the child we rescued is bound to die ”. They came to me and asked me : “ Have you any milk ? ” It was then I remembered my baby. “ Yes, I had some milk ” I said, “ but, after what has happened to me, I don’t know if I have any left. ” “ Well, take a look at the child, before it dies ”, they answered. And, so saying, they brought me

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the cradle with the child in it, just as I had last seen it, without anything missing. I beheld, gave a scream, tumbled face-downwards on the deck, swooning. They threw water over me, and "What is the matter?" they asked. As soon as I had come to myself, I sobbed and pressed the child to my bosom. "What is the matter with you, woman?" repeated those who stood by. "This child is my son," I cried. The captain came up. "This child belongs to you, does it?" he said. "Very well! Tell us what it has underneath it in the cradle". Whereupon, I fell to describing, piece by piece, all the different articles of which the child's bed was composed; and, one by one, they drew them forth and found everything, just as though I had put them there a moment before. The bystanders wept and praised God, and returned Him thanks. Having once been thus whelmed in the flood, torn from my child, and again miraculously re-united, how should I be afraid in the midst of the storm? If it be God's will that I should drown, what will my fears avail me?"

LXXXIII A merchant of Siraf told me the following story: "I was going", he said, "from Oman to Basra, and, among the other passengers, was a native of Mansoura, a very

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pretty young girl. One of the sailors, I noticed, made her overtures, but, since she kept her cabin, there was very little he could do. Near Hârek, the aspect of the sea changed, the wind blew a tempest and the ship broke up. As luck would have it, I managed to cling onto the rigging. Several others had done the like, and, in their number, was the young girl from Mansoura and the sailor whose fancy she had taken. He at once set about her, that he might have his pleasure; but she fended him off with kicks, delivered to such purpose that he kept his distance for the rest of the day. All the while, we were climbing and plunging at the caprice of the waves. At last, the girl resisted no more; the sailor mastered her and had his way. I watched it happen; but we were quite unable to shift our places, or to speak to him and stop him. Besides, we hardly gave it a thought, seeming, as we did, to be only a hair's-breadth from our doom. Morning came, and the young girl had disappeared. Those, who dropped off into the sea, outnumbered those who saved their lives upon the rigging.

LXXXIV At Sihour, the same informant told me, there dwelt a man, called Abbas, son of Mahan, a native of Siraf, who was *hebermen* of the Musulmans.

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Now, a sailor, passing through Sihour, noticed an idol, which represented a young woman of great beauty. None saw him, he thought ; so he ran towards the idol and embraced it. Then, somebody or other coming by, the fellow took fright and ran off. The passer-by, who had seen what he did, laid hold of the sailor, hailed him before the King of Sihour, related the whole incident, and the sailor confessed his action. "What think you ?" asked the king of his people who stood round. "Let him be thrown to the elephants", suggested one, "that they may trample him underfoot." "Or hacked in pieces", added another. "No", said the king, "we must not do that. He is an Arab, and there are treaties between us and the Arabs. One of you go and find Abbas, son of Mahan, *hebermen* of the Musulmans, and inquire of him thus : 'How is it you punish a man, who has defiled a woman in a mosque ?' Take note of his answer and act accordingly."

So one of his vizirs went and performed the orders of the king. Abbas, son of Mahan, purposing to exalt his faith in the eyes of these infidels, replied : "Under such circumstances, we put the man to death." Whereupon the sailor was executed. Abbas, learning the details of the business, feared lest the king should forcibly detain him in the town and secretly fled away from Sihour.

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LXXXV Darbezin of Siraf, brother-in-law to Obeïd Allah, son of Ayyoub, who was the grandfather of Abd-Allah, son of Fadl, the Cadi, informed me : "I was one day at Khanfou, a city of Greater China, when . . . the people sat down all along the road which the chamberlain was to follow, in order to see the procession. The escort began to pass, in separate parties, at sunrise, and continued till *asr* (three hours after noon). At last, the chamberlain came himself. He had with him a hundred thousand horsemen."

LXXXVI Abbas, son of Mahan, *sarhin* of Sihour, has communicated to me the following singular adventure, which he had from a merchant to whom it happened.

This merchant had freighted a ship, for the voyage from Sindan or Sihour to Oman. Among other goods, he gave his agent a long plank of *sadj*, bearing his mark, and said to him : "Do you sell this, and, with the money, buy me such and such an object", of which he handed him a memorandum. The ship set sail. "Some two months had gone by, or longer", the merchant continued, "when, as I was sitting in my house, a man came to me and said : 'A long plank of wood has drifted into the

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port and your name is inscribed on it'. I got up and went to the port, full of misgivings. I looked, and there, sure enough, was my plank of *sadj*. Thenceforward, I was convinced that my ship must have been wrecked at sea. The plank was of an unusual length, and, doubtless, they would not have removed it from the hold and thrown it overboard, with other cargo, on the occasion of a storm. Thus persuaded, I received condolences, and, making up my mind to the loss of the ship and its contents, I went about my business as usual. I had ceased to cherish any hopes, and some two months had passed without bringing any news from sea, when a fellow came in and told me: 'Your ship is in sight'. Down I rushed to the port; my ship came into harbour, and my agent landed and came to speak to me. I questioned him, and, 'We are safe and sound, and in good health', he replied. 'Haven't you lost anything', I asked him, 'or thrown anything overboard?' 'Not so much as a tooth-pick!' my agent replied. I gave thanks to God, and continued: 'What have you done with such-and-such a plank of wood?' I inquired. 'I sold it', he said, 'at the price of thirty and something *dinars*, and laid out the money in purchases for you'. I was considerably surprised, hearing this. Finally, he handed me his accounts, which included the price of the plank. 'Come', I admonished him, 'you shall tell me the truth about that plank of *sadj*'. And I

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pressed him till he had told me the story which follows : ‘ We had arrived at Oman ’, he said, ‘ and had disembarked the whole ship’s cargo upon the beach. A violent storm got up. The wood was rolled back into the sea by the waves. The sand was turned up and, as God willed it, covered such-and-such planks. Next day, I collected my people and we made a search for the lost goods. We found everything, except the long plank of wood. I thought that it might, perhaps, be hidden in the sand, and made them dig all along the beach, but without success ’ ”. And so the waves had carried it out to sea, and brought it home to its master. Of its kind, that is one of the most remarkable stories it has ever been my lot to hear.

LXXXVII In the year 342, a ship, which belonged to a merchant of Basra, was going from Oman to Jeddah, when it encountered a violent hurricane of wind, in the vicinity of Shedjertan. A part of the cargo was thrown overboard, and, among other things, five bales of *balîdj* cotton ; and thus the ship was saved. That same year, another ship, belonging to the same merchant, left Basra for Aden and Ghalafqa. Approaching the same neighbourhood, hard by Shedjertan, a little boat, which was being towed behind the ship, slipped its

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cable, and was carried off by the waves. Several of the crew jumped into the long-boat to recover it. They followed it, and came up with it in a small bay. And there, upon the beach, what should they see but five bales of *balîdj* cotton, which bore the master's imprint. They put them aboard the long-boat, and regained the ship. At first, they thought that they had come from some wreck. But, later, they ascertained that these bales were part of the cargo thrown overboard.

LXXXVIII I have been told, that a person, whose word deserved credence, related how, in some Indian country, he had seen two men adopt a curious method of suicide. Close together, they dug two pits, and, climbing into them and standing upright, they filled the interior with dried dung and lighted it. While the fire gnawed at the lower part of their bodies, they played a game on a draught-board, set between them, chewed betel, and sang songs, thus continuing till the fire had reached their hearts and they were dead. My informant had forgotten whether the original narrator had said that they died during the first day, or whether they survived until the morrow.

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LXXXIX Abd-el-Wahid, son of Abd-er-Rahman, of Fous (or Qous), who was the nephew of Abou-Hatim El-Fasoui, and who had a long experience of seafaring, told me that the Indians used to wear their hair, arranged upon the crown of the head like a mitre, and employ straight-bladed swords. Following a war, the victors said to the vanquished: "We will not spare you unless you wear your hair smoothed down and carry curved sabres like us". For the victorious tribe had smooth hair and employed curved sabres, called *qarâtil*. And the custom continues to this day among those tribes.

XC Ali, son of Mohammed, son of Sahl, who was known under the name of Serouber and who had visited Tana and . . . once told me that houses there are built upon the edge of the water. The inhabitants, all of them, great and small, are afflicted with night-blindness, because they eat too much '*alim*', that is to say, the male of the marine turtle. Everybody has a rope, tied to his house-door and leading down to the water, where it is attached to a stake. Their blindness comes on at the approach of sunset. From that moment, whichever of them would relieve some natural

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urgency must, perforce, take hold of the rope, go down to the water, purge himself there and return in the like manner. And thus it is till the morrow and broad daylight, and the sun is already high. Now and again, a silly practical-joker, happening on their country, will amuse himself by detaching the rope from one doorway and tying it to another. The blind man goes down to the water and comes back, to find strangers in possession. Then they lose their tempers and start a quarrel : “ What are you doing in my house ? ”

XCI A person, named Abou Taher, of Bagdad, related how he had made the voyage to Zabadj, and said that, among the townships of the Isle of Zabadj, is one called Merqavend, where ambergris abounds. . . . The natives, who do not know its value, sell it very cheap. And Abou Thaer himself had a certain amount of it, which he took aboard the ship, without the captain's knowledge.

XCII Yezid of Oman, captain of one of the ships which make the voyage to the land of the Zindjs, said to me : “ In that country,

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I saw two great mountains, and a defile between them, which bears the traces of fire and is strewn with calcined bones and charred hides. When I made inquiries, they told me that, at certain periods, this valley is swept by a fire. If there are any sheep or other beasts pasturing in the defile, or if there are shepherds, who let themselves be surprised by the fire, they are burned up, one and all. This fire happens on certain days, and comes running along the ground like a torrent ”.

XCIII In the countries of India, there are bands of robbers, who go from town to town, attacking merchants, natives as well as foreigners. These brigands fall upon their man, in his house, on the road, or even in the open market-place. They set a knife at his throat, exclaiming : “ Give us such-and-such, or you are a dead man ”. And, should anyone run up to their victim’s assistance, they slay him, though he be a king, but are also prepared to kill themselves, if escape becomes impossible. So, when they make an onslaught, nobody dares resist them or say a word, for fear of death. And the man, whom they have laid hands on, follows them and stops just where they please, in the market-place or in his own house, in his shop or in his garden, and collects

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the sum of money and the goods they demand. Meanwhile, they eat and drink, but always with unsheathed knives in their hands. Then their unlucky victim is obliged to lend them the services of a man, who carries his ransom and goes along in their company as far as their lodging, where they are out of danger. There they take the ransom, money and goods, and turn the porter loose.

XCIV Mohammed, son of Mouslim, of Siraf, who had lived more than twenty years at Tana, and had travelled in most Indian countries and was excellently well-informed with regard to the manners and usages of the inhabitants, told me how, one day, twelve bandits came to Dhimour and Tana, and laid hold of an Indian merchant, whose father was a very rich man and very much attached to this son, his only child. They took him in his house and demanded some ten thousand *dinars*, a sum, comprising only a fraction of the father's wealth. Whereupon, the merchant sent his father a messenger, warning him what had occurred and begging he would ransom him and thus save his life. His father sought out the brigands, talked with them, and suggested that they should reduce their demand to a thousand *dinars*. But they would not hear

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him, and insisted that he gave them the entire amount.

Understanding them to be so resolved, the merchant went to the king, explained the whole business, and remarked: "This is an intolerable state of affairs. If those bandits aren't taught a lesson, life will become impossible in your country". "What can we do?" asked the king. "It is easy enough for me to get to grips with them; but, if we set about them, they will put your son to death; and he is your only child". "Yes, worse luck!" answered the merchant, "but they are asking an exorbitant ransom. I can't reduce myself to poverty, just to save my son. What you must do, is to pile wood round the house, barricade the door, and then set fire to it". "But your son will burn with the rest of the people inside", the king protested. "Let them burn!" retorted the merchant. "I'd rather it came to that, than lose so much money".

So, the king sent his men, to barricade the doorway and fire the house. It was burnt to the ground, and, with it, the brigands, the merchant's son, and all that was inside.

They say that, in Upper India, the custom still prevails of burning the old people, women as well as men.

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XCV At the court of the kings of Zabedj and the gold-bearing countries, it was formerly the custom that no man should sit down in their presence, except squatting in the position named *Sila*, whether he were native, foreigner, or Musulman. Whoever permitted himself the liberty of stretching out his legs, or of sitting down after any other fashion, was punished by a considerable fine, assessed according to his fortune.

Well, it happened that a sailor, called Djehoud Koutah, a man held in general esteem, was received by one of these monarchs, whose name was Bidbana-Kala. The sailor was heavy with years. He sat down before the king, adopting the required position. But the business he had come about dragged on and the king delayed giving his decision ; and so it continued, till the old man changed the subject and began to speak of something else. " We have at Oman ", he remarked, a fish, called *Kanad*, which is *so* long ". And, thus saying, he stretched out his leg and marked it off at the middle of his thigh. " There are others ", he proceeded, " as long as *that* ". And he stretched out his other leg, with one hand touching the middle of his body. Said the king to his vizir : " The fellow must have some reason for speaking to us about fishes, when we were discussing quite another subject. What think you ? " " My lord ", replied the vizir, " he is an old man, stricken in

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years and weak. He is unable to maintain the prescribed position till the end of the audience. His weariness has got the better of him, and he has hit on this way of relieving it ". Whereat the king said : " It is proper that the custom should be dispensed with, as far as foreigners, who are also Musulmans, are concerned ". So, for them, he had it abolished. And, ever since, Musulmans sit down before the kings of Zabedj at their own convenience. But the rest are obliged to continue sitting, in the position, named *Sila*, under pain of the fine described above.

XCVI There are in India devotees and religious persons of many kinds, among them being the *Bîkour*, a sect originally coming from Serendib, who take kindly to Musulmans and show them much sympathy. In summer, they go about, scantily clothed, with bare feet, only covering their nakedness with some rag or other, which is, now and then, a mere scrap of stuff, four fingers broad, tied to the girdle by a string and thence falling over their secret parts. In winter, they clothe themselves with grass. Some of them wear an *izar*, made up of a patchwork of bits and pieces of every colour. They smear their bodies with the ashes of dead Indians' bones. They shave their heads, pluck

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out their beards and moustaches, but keep their pubic hair and the hair of their arm-pits. They cut and chew their nails. Each of them has the upper part of a dead man's skull, by way of porringer, from which he eats and drinks, to mortify himself and as a mark of humility.

When the news of the Prophet's coming—on whom be the salvation and the blessing of God!—reached the people and the rulers of Serendib, they dispatched one of their number to search him out and inquire the subject of his teaching; the messenger, after going from city to city, at length arrived at Medina, when the Prophet was already dead, as well as Abou-Bekr. The chief of the Musulmans was then Omar, son of El-Khattab, who gave the messenger all the necessary instruction. But, returning homewards, he died on the road, in the neighbourhood of Mekran. An Indian serving-man, however, who had accompanied him, was able to gain Serendib and thither carry the knowledge he had acquired, touching the Prophet and Abou-Bekr. And he described what he had seen of their successor, Omar, son of El-Khattab, his humility, the patched garments he wore, and his nightly vigils in the mosques. It was in accordance with the report of this young man, that religious persons among the Indians adopted their habits of self-abasement and of wearing patchwork garments, just as Omar did. Thence also come

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the kindness and sympathy which they show to Musulmans.

By the religion of the Indians, wine is forbidden to men but allowed to women. There are some Indians who are secret drinkers.

XCVII India has her magicians and augurs, whose practices are well known. I have already made some mention of them.

Abou-Youssef, son of Mouslim, informs me that Abou-Bekr El-Fasoui told him, that he had heard Moussa, of Sindabour, relate the following story : " One day ", he said, " I was in conversation with the Sahib of Sindabour, when the Sahib suddenly burst out laughing. ' Do you know why I was laughing ? ' he inquired. ' No ', I answered him. ' I was laughing ', he continued, ' because there are two lizards upon the wall, and one of them has just said to the other : " Here comes a stranger as our guest " '. His folly astonished me, and, soon afterwards, I thought to leave him. But ' Do not go, till you have seen the conclusion of the affair ', he urged me. And thus we stayed talking, and presently a servant entered and said : ' A ship from Oman has come into the port '. Some little time later, there arrived porters, carrying baskets, which contained divers goods, fabrics, and rose-water. While a

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basket was being opened, of those which contained rose-water, what should run out but a big lizard. Under my very eyes, it joined the other two upon the wall”.

XCVIII It was an adept in these same magical arts, who laid a spell upon the crocodiles in the port of Serira, where, since that day, they have done no one any harm. Formerly, you could not go near the water without getting from them some grievous hurt. They teemed there, in an incredible number. But an Indian came by, who said to the King of Serira: “If you will, I can cast such a spell upon the crocodiles that, henceforth, they shall touch no one in the port”. “Do so”, answered the king, “and your reward shall be such-and-such”. Then the fellow disappeared, and could not be found again.

Some while later, another Indian, versed in magic and in divinatory science, came and established himself at Serira. He made a friend and one day said to him: “I should like to show you something curious”. “Very well”, replied his friend. So the Indian sat down at the edge of the water, pronounced certain words, and then remarked to his companion: “You can go into the water now, without fear

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of crocodiles. Or, if you would rather, get someone else to go in ; or I will go in myself". "Go in yourself", said his friend. Whereupon, he did, in fact, enter the water and was presently followed by his companion. Round them swam the crocodiles, but did them not the least hurt. They emerged, and "Shall I remove the spell?" the magician asked. "Do so", said the other; a dog was thrown in, and, in an instant, the crocodiles had rent it to bits.

The report of the Indian's magic power came to the ears of the king, who sent for him and demanded: "Are you really able to do such-and-such a thing". "Assuredly", he replied. Straightway, the king leapt on horseback, and reached the port. With him he had taken two men, whose death he wished to compass. "Come, perform!" he exclaimed. The Indian pronounced his spell upon the water; one of the two men was pushed in, and the crocodiles swam round but showed no sign of attacking him. "Disenchant them," the king commanded. The magician pronounced a new form of words, and the crocodiles tore him in pieces. "Well done", said the king. "You deserve your reward", giving him a round sum of money, investing him in a garment of honour, and lavishing on him, besides, promises of future bounty.

Next day, the king said to the magician: "I wish to see you do what you did yesterday, all

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over again ". " Very good ", he replied. Then the king called one of his servants, a man of unequalled strength and hardihood. " As soon as I make you a sign ", he commanded him, " strike off this enchanter's head, and without a moment's delay ". They went down to the port. The Indian performed his rite. The second prisoner, condemned to death, was thrust in. The crocodiles did not touch him ; they constrained him to traverse the port from side to side, and, though surrounded by crocodiles, he got from them not so much as a scratch. When the king was assured that the enchantment comprehended the whole port, he gave his slave the agreed sign, and, there and then, the slave lopped off the enchanter's head ; since which day the crocodiles in the port of Serira are absolutely harmless.

XCIX Theft, among the Indians, is a very serious offence. If the thief is of Indian descent and is some poor wretch without fortune, then the king condemns him to death. If, on the other hand, he is a person of substance, the king takes away all that he has or imposes a heavy fine. And thus it is, when a man knowingly acts the receiver. In general, death is the penalty of thieving among them.

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If the thief is a Musulman, he is judged by the *hebermen* of the Musulmans, who pronounces sentence according to the laws of Islam. The *hebermen* takes the place of the Cadi in a Musulman country; he can only be chosen from those who have made a profession of Islam.

C Raced El-Ghoulam, son of Bâlishâd, has informed me: "During a crossing I made from Siraf to Basra, on board a fine craft, in the month of *Dhou'l-qada* of the year 305, a tempest struck us nearby Ras-el-Kamilâ. We threw out a part of the cargo. The waves ran so high that they darkened the ship overhead, then broke beneath it. Many was the time I looked up towards the sky, but never had sight of it; for the waves quite shut it out. They hid the light of day from us, and, some long time, we were in a sort of twilight.

CI The same informant has told me, that in India, in Sind and other countries, the most distinguished merchants and women of the highest position, though, it might be,

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the favourite of the king herself, gather the dung of kine and buffaloes. If there is someone at hand, to take it away, they do so ; and, if not, they leave their mark upon it, until such time as they can send and claim it.

The Indians eat the flesh of dead beasts (of which the throats have not been cut), that is to say that the animal is clubbed on the head, whether it be sheep, bird, or whatever else, till the life has departed ; then they use it for their food.

It is reported that a great man among them, at Dhimour and Soubada, passing a dead rat, picked it up and gave it to his son or his servant, who carried it home and ate it ; with them, the rat is numbered among the animals which they eat.

CII I have already imparted several interesting pieces of information, to do with the *Dhibadjat-ed-doum*, a group of islands, of which the first is in the neighbourhood of the *Dhibadjat-el-kastedj* and the last near the Isles of Wâqwâq. These *Dhibadjat* number some thirty thousand, twelve thousand of them being inhabited, as merchants tell. Their length varies from half a *parasang* to ten ; there is the distance of a *parasang* between them. And they are all of them sandy.

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CIII Somebody once told me that, in a city of India, he had seen an elephant, which had been trained to run its master's errands. The creature was given a bag, wherein they put the *wada* or ready money, together with a memorandum of the articles on which this sum was to be spent. He would go to the greengrocer's. And the greengrocer, as soon as he saw the elephant coming, put aside any other business he might have on hand, left his other customers, and, taking the elephant's bag, counted the money he found therein and examined the memorandum, providing it with the best of everything it wanted, and the cheapest as well. Now and again, the shop-keeper would make an error of calculation, while he was counting out the money, and the elephant would straightway mix up the coins with its trunk, so that he was obliged to start counting afresh. Finally, the elephant used to go off with its purchases, and, getting home, did its master find that it had been badly served, he beat it, and the elephant would rush back to the greengrocer's shop, and turn it topsyturvy. And thus it did, whether it had been given more than it deserved, or less than the money required.

That same elephant swept, watered and pounded rice, with a pestle it held in its trunk. It drew water from the well, by means of a bucket on a rope. In fact, it did every kind of work.

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Whenever he had some long excursion to make, its master rode it. A little boy also rode it, out into the fields. The elephant rooted up grass and tore down leaves with its trunk. Assisted by the child, it stuffed leaves and grass into a bag, and took them home for its provender.

Thus trained, an elephant will fetch very high prices, as much as ten thousand *dirhems*, so they say.

CIV Among adventures at sea which have been somewhat bruited about, here is the story told me by a merchant :

“ I sailed from Siraf ”, he informed me, “ in the year 306, upon a ship which was going to Dhimour. We were accompanied by a ship, belonging to Abd-Allah, son of Djanid, and another which came from Seba. These three vessels were, all of them, large craft and well known at sea ; their captains also enjoyed a considerable reputation in the world of sailors. The passengers they carried, merchants, pilots, crew, and others, numbered twelve hundred souls. Their cargo, in provisions and merchandise, was of an incalculable value. After eleven days’ sailing, we came within sight of the eminences of the coast of Sendan, Tana, and Dhimour. Never before, it was generally said,

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had the voyage been accomplished in so short a space of time. We were in high spirits and congratulated one another on such a fortunate crossing. We were out of any danger, we thought, and would touch land during the morrow morning; our sails were unfurled; when a sudden squall got up, accompanied with lightning, thunder, and rain. 'Best throw the cargo overboard', advised the pilots and sailors. But (the captain of the vessel), Ahmed, opposed this suggestion. 'Nothing shall be thrown overboard', he declared, 'till I have given up all hope and I am quite sure that our doom is imminent'. Men went down to bale out the water from both sides of the hold. The two ships, accompanying us, were in the same plight, and waited their captains' decision, to throw the cargo overboard or retain it. At daybreak, the merchants approached Ahmed: 'Make up your mind', they urged, 'to sacrifice the cargo. It will be no fault of yours. Here we are at the point of death'. 'I will do nothing of the sort', he replied. And so it continued, for five days, our condition growing no worse. But, on the sixth day, Ahmed, realising that the ship was about to founder, finally commanded that it be lightened. By that time, to throw anything overboard was no longer in our power, the rain having increased the weight of sacks and bales, and what had previously weighed five hundred *mens* now weighing as much as

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fifteen hundred. Our danger was pressing, and we launched the long-boat, some thirty-three men entering it. Ahmed was begged to come too, but he answered: 'I won't leave the ship. The ship has a better chance than the long-boat. If it sinks, I shall sink with it. What care I for safety, when my living has gone!' "

The merchant, who told me the story, was among those who got aboard the long-boat. "There we passed five days", he told me, "foodless and waterless. Hunger and thirst and every other kind of suffering so weakened us that we even lost the faculty of speech. With signs, we began to debate whether we should not be well-advised to eat one of our number. In the long-boat was a little boy, good-looking, still a child, whose father had stayed on the ship. It was him we resolved to eat. He understood what we meant, and I noticed how he looked up at the sky, his lips and eyes quietly moving. Happily, that very same hour, we sighted land, and soon could distinguish it clearly. The long-boat was borne ashore, touched land, split, and filled with water. We had not the strength to move nor rise. A couple of men came running down the beach to us. 'Where do you come from?' they demanded. 'From such-and-such a ship', we replied. 'Give us a hand and pull us ashore'. And, when they had done as we asked them and we had got ashore,

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more dead than alive, one of the two men went off. 'Where are we?' I asked his fellow. 'The smoke you see over there', he said, 'comes from the mainland. My companion has gone to the village. You'll find there food, water, and clothing'. And thither we were presently taken. As for those who had stayed on the three ships, not a soul of them all was saved, but only those who had put out in the long-boat."

CV A truly astounding piece of information is that communicated to me by a sailor who had spent long years in India, and to whom, in his turn, it had been imparted by many travellers who had penetrated the centre of the country: as how, in the territory of High Cashmere, there is a place, called Terna-rayin, where are shadowy gardens, watered by running streams, and where the Djinns hold their market. You can hear the sound of their voices, buying and selling, but their persons you cannot see. And thus it has gone on, since an immemorial age. "Do you know if the market is permanent", I asked the sailor, "or whether it only takes place at certain times?" "That I did not inquire", he replied.

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CVI A man, who had been in China, once told me how, in that country, he had seen a stone, which attracted lead through the sides of a vase, and which, if it was put beneath a pregnant woman, helped her to an easy delivery. There is also a stone which attracts copper and another which attracts gold, just as the lode-stone attracts iron. Finally, there is a stone which extinguishes fire, and within which is a smaller stone moving about.

And he likewise informed me how, in the neighbourhood of the *gobbs* of Serendib, he had seen a stone, that, when it was broken, yielded a worm which crawled out to the extent of ten ells and then died. Upon its head and tail it had a kind of down, like the down on a young bird.

CVII Among other marvels is a mountain of the Yemen, from the peak of which water flows drop by drop, and, congealing as it touches the ground, forms the Yemenese alum.

CVIII According to an eye-witness, the trees of Lebanon, which are cedars, grow

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in ravines and in places where there is running water. They have no seed, and their girth has shown no change since the beginning of their existence. The people, to whom they belong, have always known them the same, and always in full beauty. They are only found in the region, betwixt the frontiers of Hasil and the frontiers of Haridj, a territory covering some fifty to a hundred *parasangs*.

CIX Somebody, who had travelled in India, once told me that he had seen, at Atakia, not far from Mankir, a city of the gold-bearing countries, a big tree, thick-boled, and much like a walnut, which bore red roses (or leaves), whereon you read, written in white characters : " There is no God but God, and Mohammed is his Prophet ".

CX In the Sea of Senf is an island, where the crabs, which touch it, become stones. This stone it is, known at Aleppo, Iraq and, generally, that is used in the composition of collyrium, for the film of the eyes. Fishermen call such crabs " river-crabs ".

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CXI I have been told that at . . . there is a much venerated fountain, covered by a huge emerald stone, supported by four golden idols. When the sun rises above the stone, the water of the fountain becomes all green.

A monarch of the vicinity, called Abar, made an inroad into this country, with the object of possessing himself of the stone. But the natives of the place are invincible, and, though they have suffered several attacks, they have always maintained their independence. One of their kings wished to take the stone also. But there appeared before him a negro who drove him off, or something in that sort.

CXII According to one of my acquaintance, in the region of the *gobbs* of Serendib, there is a bird which hatches out its young on the sea-shore; whereupon, the winds cease to blow during a period of forty days.

CXIII “At Beriyyin (?), a city of India”, Mohammed of Oman has informed

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me, "I saw a young Indian, apprehended for theft or for some other crime. The king had ordered that he should be flayed alive, and, while the operation was in progress, the young man talked, sang, and gave no sign of emotion, till the moment when his navel was reached. As soon as that had been cut away, incontinently he expired."

CXIV I have it from the same informant, that, in one of the Isles of Wâqwâq, there is a bird, like the green woodpecker, its plumage being speckled with red, white, green, and blue. It is called the *semendel*. It can enter into the fire and come out scatheless, and it can go a long while, eating nothing but earth. When it is nesting, it does not drink till the eggs have hatched. And, as soon as its young have emerged, it deserts them for a certain space of time, and keeps away from its brood. Flies and gnats buzz round them. But, when they are fledged and begin to run about, then it gives proof of its maternal devotion.

In these Isles of Wâqwâq, there is also a creature, like a hare, which changes its sex, and is now male and now female. At least, that is the account given of it by the people of Serendib, according to my informant's story, who, in his turn, had it from an Indian. For my own part,

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I know not what to say. Similarly, they pretend that the hare itself changes its sex ; which, to my thinking, is a mere fantasy, with no foundation in fact. God alone knows the truth of the matter.

CXV An informant, who had scoured the seas, once told me that he had seen, at Sofala of the Zindjs, a beast proportioned like the lizard and much like it both in colour and in shape. The male is doubly male and the female doubly female. Their bite cannot be cured ; the wound they inflict continues open and never heals up. This creature particularly frequents the plantations of sugar-cane and *dourah*.

But it is with serpents and vipers that this country swarms. And a passer-by is sometimes attacked by as many as three or four at the same time, which rend him in pieces. Does he drive off one of them, two return in its place.

CXVI Djafar, son of Rashid, who went, under the name of Ibn-Lakis, a well-known sailor, to the gold-bearing countries,

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has informed me that, once upon a time, a serpent, coming into the Bay of Dhimour, swallowed there an enormous crocodile ; at which news, the Sahib of Dhimour dispatched a company of men to capture the serpent, and three thousand tried warriors banded together against the monster, and, at length, prevailing against it, tied a rope round its neck. Serpent-catchers arrived, drew its teeth, and then chained it up. It had a wound, on its head, about the ears. It was measured, and found to be forty cubits long. They carried it home across their necks ; it weighed thousands of pounds. And this happened in the year 340.

CXVII A traveller, who had made his way among the inhabitants of Wâqwâq, once described to me the bigness of their towns and islands. By the word "bigness", I do not mean that their towns are of vast extent, but that they are thickly populated. The Wâqwâqians have a certain affinity with the Turks. They are most industrious artisans, while, as for their morals, they are treacherous, crafty, and deceitful, the lowest and most ill-intentioned set of people you could find anywhere.

Ibn-Lakis has imparted to me some extraordinary pieces of information concerning them. . . . An attack was made on them once

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with a fleet of a thousand ships. That was in the year 334. The battle was sharp, but it was impossible to prevail against them. . . . Ibn-Lakis also said that the Isles of Wâqwâq were opposite China.

CXVIII Serira is situated at the extremity of the Island of Lâmeri, one hundred and twenty *zama* from Kala. The estuary of Serira, so they say, runs fifty *parasangs* inland. It is a river of greater breadth than the Tigris at Basra, with a stream of sweet water equally large. In the whole island, there is no longer estuary. The tide is felt every twelve hours. The water contains crocodiles; but they are harmless near the dwelling-places of men; for they were bewitched as we have related above; while, into those parts of the river, remote from human habitation, they make it quite impossible to venture. Some of the houses are built on dry land, but most of them float upon the water, and are supported by beams of wood, lashed together in collar shape, which will last for an indefinite period. Thus the inhabitants do from their apprehension of fires, since their wooden-built houses are particularly liable to catch fire, and, once a fire starts, there is no stopping it. But, on the water, they are better protected; if a fire breaks

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out anywhere, each householder can cut his moorings, move house, and take up other quarters, far from the scene of the conflagration. And, supposing a householder tires of his locality, he can change the neighbourhood of his residence in the same fashion. These houses are marshalled in the bay like ships, and the water which surrounds them is very cool, and fresh too, coming as it does from the hills and flowing down into the estuary, towards the sea, in like manner with the Tigris.

I am told by the same informant, that he had heard say by a ship's-captain how vessels, which have started out for Sofala of the Zindjs, often land on a coast, where dwell cannibal negroes. It happens by accident, winds and currents diverting the vessel from its course and drawing it this way, in spite of all that the captain can do. The cannibal tribe are some fifteen hundred *parasangs* distant from Qabila. God's wisdom is over all ! As for the place, at which the ships touch, it is a thousand, or, by the very lowest estimate, eight hundred *parasangs* beyond Qabila, and a voyage of about forty-two *zama*.

CXIX Ibn-Lakis has related to me how, happening to be at Sofala with one of the kings of the Zindjs, in ran a fellow, who said

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to the king: "Such-and-such a bird"—Ibn-Lakis had forgotten its name—"has alighted in such a wood, captured and torn to pieces an elephant, and was making a meal of it when it was taken". Whereupon, the King of the Zindjs rose and hurried off to the wood among a throng of his people, said Ibn-Lakis, and I went with them. We arrived, and there the bird was struggling upon the ground, and there lay the carcase of the elephant, of which it had eaten a quarter. The king gave orders that the bird's wing plumage should be plucked; it had twelve large feathers, six to each wing. Others were secured, as well as the beak and a part of its talons, and a small piece of the creature's entrail. The quill of one of these feathers contained two skinfuls of water. They said that it was a bird of the country, which, as it was passing over the wood, had caught sight of the elephant, seized it in its claws, carried it up into the air, dropped it again, and swooped down to devour it. Some people, who happened to be in the vicinity, had attacked it with a flight of poisoned arrows, and had thus overcome and slain it.

CXX Between Thabia and the Island of Ghilemi is a little sea, called the Sea of Saifou, which it takes six days to cross. All

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ships, which cross it, must keep to thirty fathoms of water ; for, if a ship gets into water of twenty fathoms, there is it whelmed, the bottom being of a fine mud, which is the destruction of ships that touch it ; seldom does a ship escape.

CXXI Among remarkable islands, in all the sea there is none like the Island of Serendib, also called Sehilan (Ceylon). It is an hundred *parasangs* long, and the circumference is three hundred *parasangs*. There they fish pearls of fine water, but little ; big pearls, when they happen upon them, are of inferior quality. And there is a mountain, called Hasin, a mountain of jargoon and diamonds. And there it was, so they say, that Adam stepped down, and you can view his footprint, which is seventy cubits long. The inhabitants are they who declare that this is Adam's footprint, and that the blessed patriarch set one foot on that spot and the other in the sea. In the same island is found a red earth, which is the *senadidj*, used for polishing rock-crystal and glass. Its trees yield excellent cinnamon bark, the famous Singalese cinnamon. The grass is red, and employed in dyeing stuffs and cotton thread ; it makes a better dye than that of *baggam*, saffron, safflower, or any other kind

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of red dye. And the island bears many another remarkable plant, which it would take too long to catalogue. They aver that the Island of Serendib contains some hundred thousand townships.

CXXII I have been told that a man of Basra (who lived half-way down Qoreish Street) related . . . how, setting out from Basra for Zabadj or some neighbouring locality . . . (and the vessel on which he travelled suffering shipwreck), he alone managed to escape and was cast ashore upon an island. "I walked into the island", he said, "and, climbing a tree, there spent the night, hidden among the leaves. Next morning, I saw approach a flock of some two hundred sheep, big as calves, herded by a monstrous-looking fellow, huge, towering, and robust, hideous in face, carrying a stick, with which he drove them. He sat down on the shore, while the sheep went pasturing under the trees. Face-downwards he lolled, and slept till about midday. Then up he got, entered the water, and presently emerged. He was stark-naked and only wore a leaf, much like the leaf of the banana-tree, tied at his middle. Catching hold of an ewe by the leg, he took her dug in his mouth and sucked her and drained the udder. Thus he

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did with several other ewes, and thereupon stretched his length in the shade of a tree. And, as he lay, his eyes upon the branches, a bird chanced to light upon the very tree which was my hiding-place. Seizing a great stone, he flung it at the bird, and his aim was sure. From branch to branch, the bird tumbled, lodging just near me. The shepherd saw me and beckoned I should descend. Weak with terror, I obeyed him, though, what with fright and lack of food, I was half-dead. He picked up the bird and dashed it against the ground. The bird, I reckoned, might weigh as much as a hundred pounds. Alive he plucked it, and with a stone of twenty pounds weight beat in its head and killed it. He redoubled his strength and, by dint of continued blows, had ground it to shreds, then rent it with his teeth, like some carnivorous beast which devours its prey. He finished the last morsel and only left the bones. But the sun grew fainter, and he rose, grasped his stick, and, starting a fearful hullabaloo, signed to me to get up, while he made as if to drive off his flock. When the sheep had been driven together, he led them to a pool of sweet water which was in the island. They slaked their thirst. He drank, and I drank also in my turn, but not without reflecting that my death was, no doubt, close at hand. Again he set forth, driving the sheep before him, as far as a kind of paddock, made of the wattled trunks of trees and shut with some manner of door.

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I entered with the flock. In the middle was a sort of cabin, solidly built of wooden beams, like a weaver's hut, twenty cubits high. Then, first of all, he lay hands upon an ewe, of the littlest and most lean, and knocked in her skull with a stone. He kindled a fire, and, tearing up the goat's flesh like some ferocious beast, with teeth and nails, flung the joints into the fire, still crude with shreds of hair and hide. The entrails he wolfed down raw. And, afterwards, going from ewe to ewe, he drained their milk, and presently, grasping the biggest round the middle, he used it for his sport ; when, the ewe bleating, he seized another, and did the same. Finally, he reached something from above his head, drank, and fell asleep, snoring like a bull.

In the middle of the night, I began creeping stealthily towards the hearth, and there picked up the scraps of meat, to keep a last gasp of breath in my body. I was afraid I should rouse the flock, and so, waking the shepherd, be treated as I had watched him treat the bird and the sheep. I stayed stretched on the ground till daybreak. In the morning he left his bed, and drove out the flock before him, and me too among them. He addressed me in a tongue I could not understand. I answered him in the various languages I knew, but none of them did he comprehend. I am a hairy man, and it was seeing this, I suppose, which turned his stomach, and made him delay eating me. Fourteen days, I lived a life which never

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changed. Not a day went by, but he caught a bird or two, and, if his hunger was not quite appeased, he slaughtered a sheep as well. I helped him gather wood and kindle the fire. Thus two months passed, and, my looks improving, he was pleased, I saw, and I realised that he was finally resolved on eating me. I had noticed that he culled the fruit of certain trees which grew in the island; he steeped them in water, strained the liquor, swallowed it, and continued blind drunk all night. I had also noticed in the island birds of the bigness of elephants and buffaloes, some bigger and some smaller. It happened, now and again, that they devoured one of the sheep, and it was for this reason he and his flock spent the night in the paddock. And, as the paddock was situated in the shadow of great trees, the shepherd had fashioned himself a kind of stable there, as closely thatched as possible, and the birds did not venture down, fearing they might be caught in the branches of the trees.

One day, I waited till he had fallen asleep drunk, and, with the help of a tree-branch, I left the paddock and walked straight in front of me, towards a plain I had had sight of from the summit of the tree. Only when morning came did I pause, and then fear constrained me to climb another tree of mighty girth. I had armed myself with a bludgeon, which I intended to use on him, should he overtake me. 'I shall either repulse him', I thought, 'or

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else he will slay me. No man can escape his destiny'. And in my tree I spent the whole day, but saw nothing of him. I had brought with me a scrap of meat, that I ate as soon as evening drew in. And thereupon I descended and set off walking all night, and, at the first gleam of day, had reached a plain thinly planted with trees. Advancing I saw naught but birds, wild beasts of unknown kinds, as well as snakes. There were springs of sweet water. I halted to pluck bananas and other fruit, and ate and drank. The monstrous birds were scouring to and fro over the plain. One of them I stalked. I had prepared strings of bark-fibre by way of rope, and, seizing the moment when it alighted to feed, I came up behind it and grappled myself to its leg and covertly made myself fast there, while it was busily occupied foraging. When the bird had eaten its fill and had drunk, it straightway took flight, described a circle, and I caught sight of the sea. I was resigned to death, but, never leaving the island, it settled on a mountain peak. In spite of my weakness, I cut myself loose and hurried away down the mountain-side, lest the adventure should turn out ill. The top of a tree was my refuge till next morning. Then I saw a column of smoke, and, thinking that smoke argued the presence of men, I pressed towards it. I had not gone far, when a troop of men accosted me. With parley that I could not understand, they took and led me to a village,

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and shut me in a house, which already contained several other prisoners. My fellow-prisoners questioned me, and I told them my adventures. And, in their turn, they told me that they were aboard a certain ship, going from Senf to Zabedj, had been overtaken by a storm, and that, twenty in all, they had saved themselves in the long-boat and landed on this island. The inhabitants laid hold of them, cast lots, and, up to the present, had eaten a considerable number. Alas ! I was bound to admit that here I had run into even greater danger than with the monstrous shepherd. However, I was somewhat consoled by observing my companions of misfortune. Eaten I might be, yet death seemed to me of small account ; so do we console ourselves by the reflection that our misfortune is shared. Next day they brought us sesame or some grain like it, together with bananas, butter, and honey. All this was set before us. ‘ Thus have we been fed ever since we fell into their power ’, said the prisoners. Each man took his share of sustenance, and presently the anthropophagi came and felt us over one by one, and chose him who appeared fattest. We bade him good-bye. Already we had confided one to the other our last wishes. They drew him into the middle of our lodging, anointed him with butter from head to foot, and made him sit in the sun for the space of two hours. Then, clustering round him, they slit his throat, carved him piecemeal under our

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eyes, roasted and ate him. A portion was stewed and another eaten raw with salt. When they had finished their meal, they swilled down a liquor which made them drunk, and fell asleep. 'Come', I said to my companions, 'up, let us kill them while they lie drunk. Then we will walk straight in front of us, and, if we escape, the Glory be to God; and, if we perish, were it not better to die than continue longer in this fearful plight? If the inhabitants take us, we can die no more than once'. But my words could not determine them, and night came on without any resolution being formed. Our masters brought us food, as their custom was. One, two, three, four days slid past, but never altered our condition. The fifth day came, and again they chose one of our number and dealt with him as before. This time, while they lay drunk and asleep, we fell on them and slit their throats to a man. Each of us took a knife, a little honey, a little butter, and a little sesame, and, as soon as night had wrapped the earth in her shadow, we stole forth from the house,—by day we had marked its situation,—and set out, anxious to gain the sea-beach at some point remote from the village. Arrived in a valley, we hid close beneath the trees, fearing we should be discovered. We were seven or eight. Day went past, and Night returned, her shadows favouring our march, which we continued along the beach, directed by the stars. At last, we judged ourselves clear

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of the Anthropophagi. We rested and ate bananas and the other fruit which the country afforded. And this went on some time, till we came to a sort of glade, where there was an abundance of delicious sweet water. We resolved on staying there, till a ship should rescue us or our lives should end. Three men died, and our number was shrunk to three. But, one day, as we walked the beach, what should we see but the hulk of a long-boat, cast up by the waters, wherein lay several rotten corpses. She was sunk in the slime, battered by the waves, and altogether much dilapidated. We drew out the corpses, flung them into the sea, and put the long-boat to rights. The island provided a clay, which we used, instead of pitch, to caulk our craft. With a tree-trunk we fashioned a mast, rigging with the fibrous leaves of cocoa-nut trees, and sails with flax. The hold we stored with cocoa-nuts, different fruits, and a provision of sweet water. One or two of our company understood navigation, and fifteen days' sail brought us to a village of Senf, where we told our story, and they gave us what we needed. Then we separated, and each of us set off whither he would. For my part I returned to Basra ”.

This man had been away from home full forty years. Meanwhile, most of his kin had died. His father had left children, who refused to acknowledge him. His property had been divided, when news of him ceased to come.

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Previously his condition had been affluent and his lot easy, but he died without recovering any part of his fortune.

CXXIII A sailor has informed me that he made the crossing from Serira to China in a *sambouq*. "We had come", he said, "a distance of fifty *zama*, when a storm burst over our vessel. A part of the cargo was sacrificed. Several days the storm lasted, and the wind raged so high that we could no longer steer. Seeing death at hand, we considered throwing ourselves into the water and striking out for a neighbouring island. Anchors cast, we had given ourselves up as lost. Suddenly, the tempest calmed, and we noticed on the island a troop of natives, and waited till one of them should approach us. But not one of them budged. We made signs to them, which they did not understand. We knew not whither we had come, persuaded, moreover, that, did we set foot on land, they might receive us ill, and that, not far away, there might be another troop, who would fall upon us, without our being able to offer any resistance. Thus, we spent four days, never daring to disembark and never an inhabitant venturing near us. However, on the fifth day, we took the necessary resolution, since we needs must replenish our

